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No.284 December 2014

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Meriden's last hurrah

Bobby Kelton outstrips Rollie Free

Rollie Free might be famous for his record-breaking efforts at Bonneville on a 1000cc Vincent – but a Harley guy went a lot quicker and got no recognition for it





Main pic: Fastest man on two wheels up to the end of 1954 – Bobby Kelton flat out on the Salt with the CB Clausen and Bud Hood built Harley. But his efforts weren't recognised as the bike was over the official capacity limit. **Top:** Rollie Free, officially recognised as the record breaker on his Vincent. **Below:** Free's Vincent, with fully enclosed streamlining. He ran faster speeds without the bodywork



N DECEMBER 23, 1954, *The Motor Cycle* carried a comprehensive feature called 'Land of Infinite Speed.' Penned by Bob Schanz, it told the story of the Bonneville Salt Flats, where speed enthusiasts

gathered to go fast on bikes and cars...

Schanz credited Rollie Free as the fastest man as the 'official' fastest rider 'to guide two wheels in America', citing his 1950 record-breaking run of 156mph aboard a Vincent Black Lightning.

It broke Joe Petrali's previous record of 136mph, set on a 1000cc Knucklehead Harley at Daytona Beach in 1937.

Free was always looking for more speed and had been experimenting with streamlining since 1950. In 1953 he tried to run faster, with the wheelbase of the bike lengthened for stability and enveloped in bodywork the shape of an egg, but crashed at 140mph.

Free's record was usurped by Joe Simpson who went 160.69 on another Vincent in 1953 but a week later, Free re-took the record at 160.73 on September 10 – using his bike in its more traditional unfaired state.

Schanz points out that while Free's record runs were recognised by the AMA, it was Bobby Kelton who was actually the fastest rider, clocking 168mph in 1952 on a Harley built by CB Clausen and Bud Hood.

Their bike, named the Brute and better known for its drag racing success, had an engine that was pumped out to near on 1500cc and the AMA only recognised bikes up to 1200cc for speed records!

Schanz said that the Brute never used a blower but ran a heady cocktail of methanol and nitro fuel which Clausen and Hood hoped would eventually give them a bike capable of running in excess of 200mph.

In 1953 they tried the machine with full streamlining and made a one-way run of 170.13mph but Kelton nearly crashed after the bike "went into an alarming wobble and the machine all but started to fly".

Clausen claimed the bike to have ample power and the only problem was keeping the front wheel on the ground.

When Schanz wrote the tale, he said that the Mk.2 Brute was being built at Clausen's shop in South Gate, California and Kelton would be seated ahead of the engine, which would be mounted on a frame just a few inches off the ground. The wheelbase had been lengthened by two feet and the new plastic bodywork shape was 'of a torpedo shape, with a rubber at the rear.' Except for the tail, the machine was to be no more than two feet high. The age of the streamliner had dawned. Clausen told Schanz: "I just want to build the world's fastest motorcycle."

MORTONS ARCHIVE

over a century of motorcycle memories

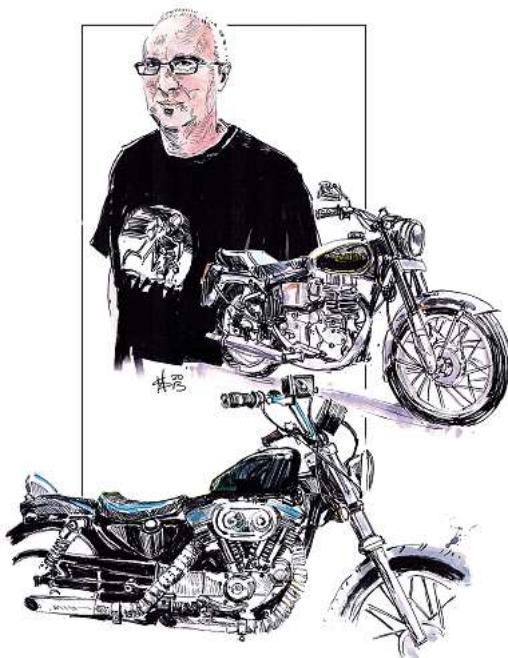
This photo was sourced from the Mortons Archive. If you are not already aware there is a huge collection of different images in the Mortons Archive, one of the greatest collections of motorcycle images in the world.

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The archive offers literally millions of images and documents relating to motorcycles and motorcycling, thousands of which can be accessed online.

Have a look at the dedicated website (www.mortonsarchive.com).



GARY PINCHIN

TREASURE CHEST OF CLASSICS

THIS MONTH'S ISSUE contains a veritable treasure chest of classic motorcycles from around the world.

The main feature is one of the most amazing replicas you'll see – an accurate reincarnation of the factory Norton monocoque racer created by a German enthusiast.

We've also news of a new Triumph Bonneville to celebrate the Ace Cafe. And staying on a British theme there's a beautifully restored BSA A7 500cc twin – plus a delightful electric start Triumph TSX, the last of a dying breed of British twins at the time it was originally conceived.

From Italy we've got a real rarity, a two-stroke trail bike produced by Ducati. Bet you didn't see that one coming! There's also a celebration of Arturo Magni's great work; from his days as the racing engineer at MV Agusta to the trick road bikes that carried his own name – and continue to do so.

And, of Japanese heritage, we've a really neat street tracker XS650 Yamaha that Phil Mather happened to spot roaring around his local back roads.

All that's left now is for me to say a massive thank you to designer James Duke and all the contributors who have helped create this magazine in the past 18 months, and to you readers for supporting us.

Yes, I'm leaving, but the magazine is in good hands. Frank Westworth – a real classic if ever there was one – is back at the helm.

Cheers

ILLUSTRATION BY MARTIN SQUIRES

MORE FROM CBG...



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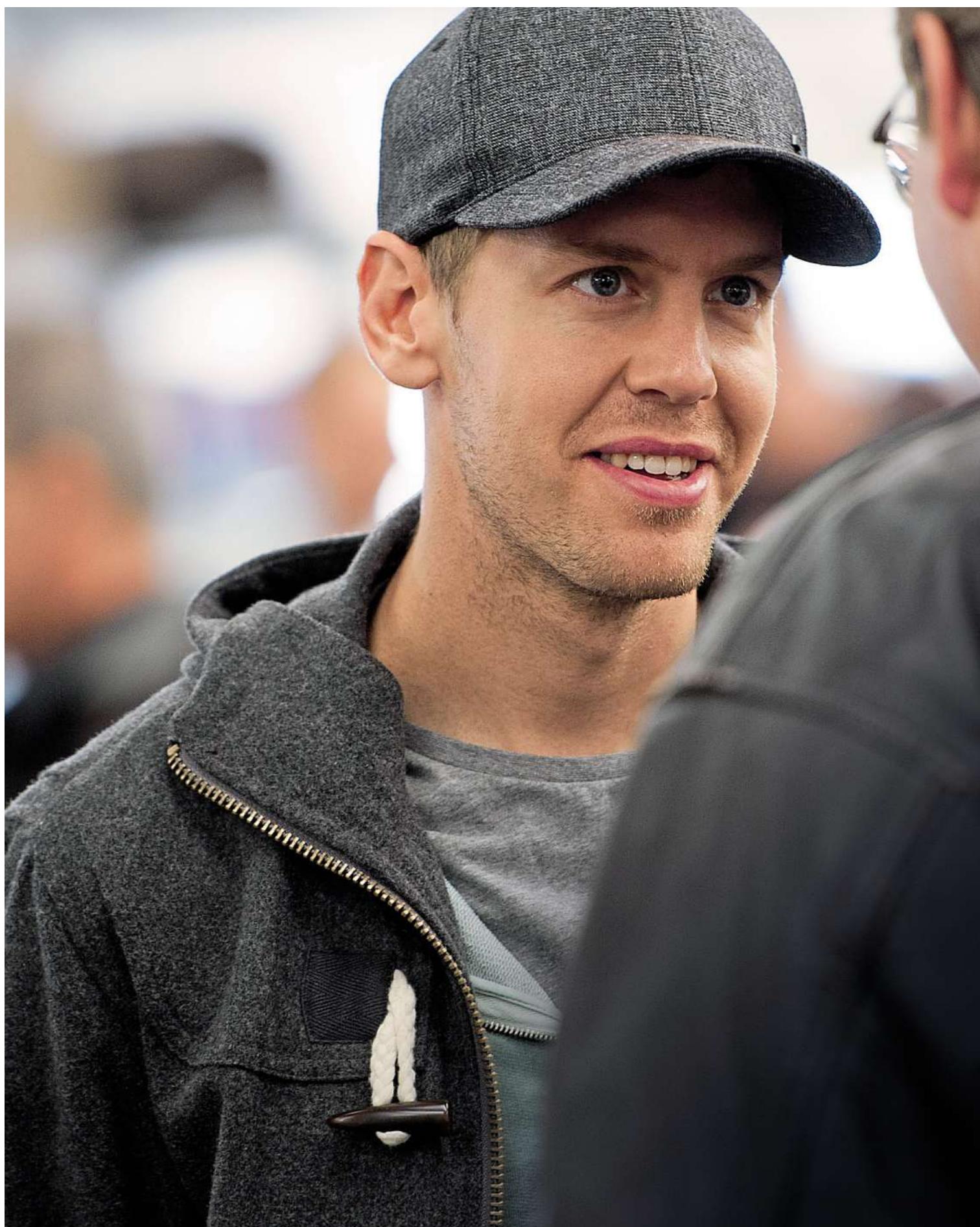
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LIVE 2 RIDE

NEWS || EVENTS || LETTERS || INTERVIEWS





ARDINGLY

The show with something for everyone at the South of England Showground. P16



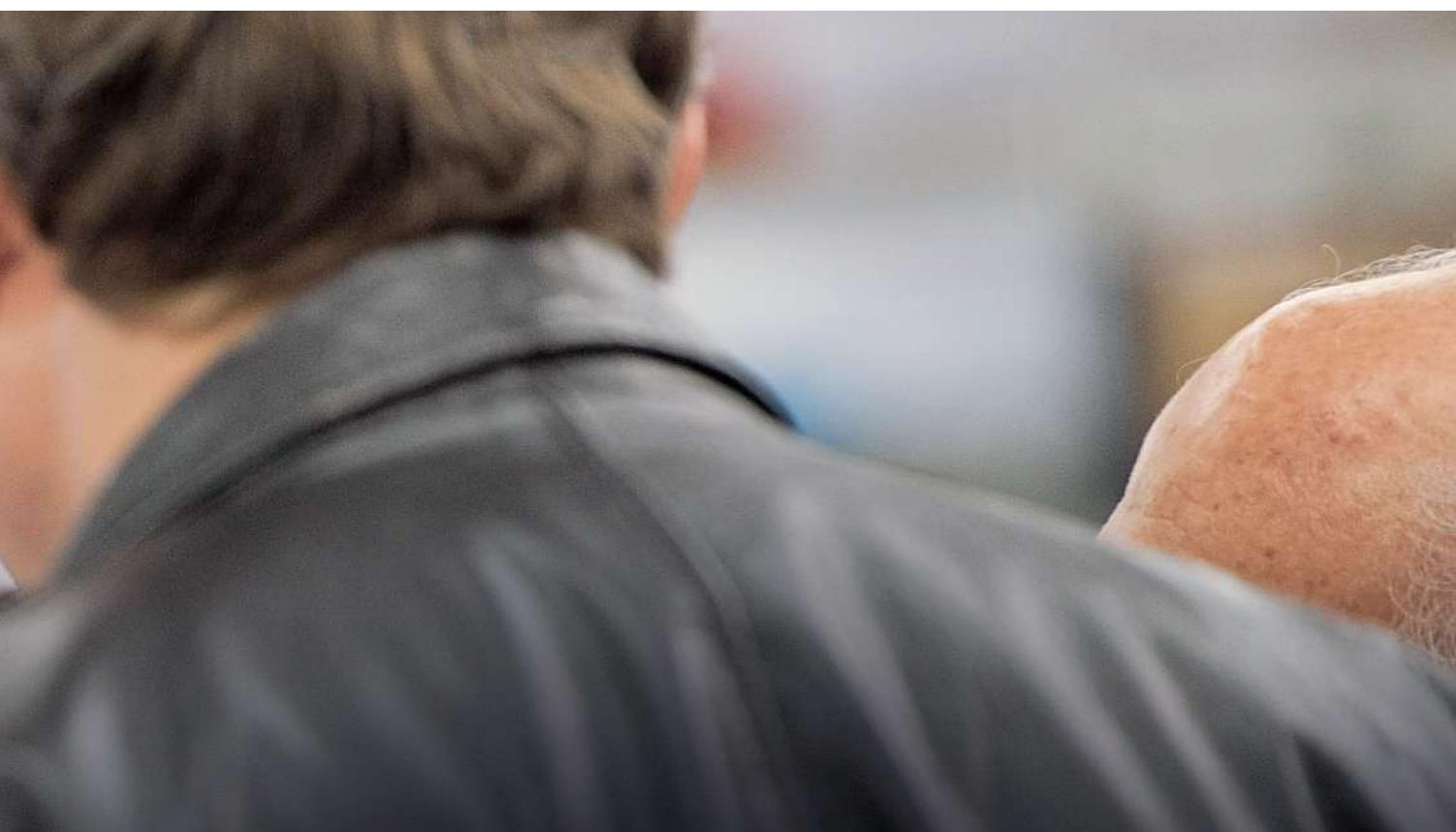
ACE TRIUMPH

A new cafe racer bearing the name of the famous Ace Cafe is unveiled. P20



PREVIEWS

Ex-BSB champ John Reynolds is guest of honour at the Newark Show, Jan 3/4. P22



Vettel bullish about Stafford show

Four times F1 world champion takes time out from racing to bid for classic bikes

PHOTOS BY JOE DICK / LEANNE MANDALL

EVENT

OCT 18-19
2014

Thousands of motorcycle enthusiasts left Staffordshire County Showground happy as one of the world's foremost classic events came to its conclusion – and among them was bike-mad four times Formula 1 world champion Sebastian Vettel.

The Red Bull Racing and soon to be Ferrari driver, well known for his love of classic motorcycles, made an unannounced stop at the Carole Nash *Classic Motorcycle Mechanics* Show on Sunday to bid on items in the Bonhams autumn Stafford sale.

Nick Mowbray, exhibition manager for the event, said: "The classic scene is alive and well across the world and it's superb to see it come to life once again at another successful Stafford show.

"Well-known stars such as Sebastian and David Beckham are, among others, raising the profile of classic biking in the mainstream and more and more people are getting involved.

"It's a cool thing to be a part of right now and that has to be of great benefit to everyone involved."

The main highlights of the October 18-19 event included special appearances from a number of motorcycle legends. Pierfrancesco Chili, the show's star guest, was joined by four times World Superbike champion Carl Fogarty, and the two shared stories from careers that saw them battle each other both on and off the track.

Chili, known as Frankie to his legion of fans, said how much he enjoyed coming to the UK: "It was in England that I was first given the name Frankie and I put it on my leathers straight away... I loved it!"

"I've always felt a special connection with the British fans and it's such a fantastic experience to come to the show and meet everyone."

The traditional auction from Bonhams provided its usual excitement with a series of stunning lots generating a total sale that topped the £1 million mark. ➤

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Top: Frankie Chili looks on as Carl Fogarty (left) holds court and shares a joke with presenter and ex-racer Steve Plater. Foggy was in top form at Stafford, with some great and amusing tales from his WSB days

Above right: Flying Merkel went for over 100 grand in the Bonhams auction.



A 1914 Flying Merkel 998cc V-twin winged its way to the sale top spot, achieving £104,540, while bidding on a 1913 BSA 4 1/4hp owned by the same family since 1958 rose to nearly three times its top estimate with the hammer finally falling at £20,700.

Graham Coxon, lead guitarist with iconic Britpop band Blur, had seven machines in the auction for sale which generated just short of £25,000. The proceeds will now be donated to the NSPCC, as announced by Coxon before the sale.

Paul Farthing, director of fundraising at the organisation said: "We are delighted with the fantastic amount that Graham has raised for us."

"The money will help us to continue our vital work helping to keep childhood safe and prevent abuse through projects and services including ChildLine."

"On behalf of all the children we work with, I would like to say a big thank you to Graham for his support."

A number of items of Barry Sheene memorabilia also sparked excited bidding, with particular attention on racing gear worn by the man many consider to be one of the greatest competitors of all time. The collection of memorabilia achieved £24,774 with a race-worn Arai helmet from the late 1990s emblazoned with 'Barry Sheene', selling to an online bidder for £2500. ➤

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The autumn Stafford Show is meant to be for the later classic Japanese machines but there were still plenty of stylish British and Italian bikes on display



Traders, autojumble, live action, trials demonstrations and fired-up racing machines completed the action-packed line-up, alongside a number of excellent exhibits from club members and private entrants.

The coveted best in show trophy was awarded to Steve Thomas for his stunning 1966 Kawasaki B8T while the Yamaha Classic Club picked up the award for best club stand.

"To win best in show at the Carole Nash *Classic Motorcycle Mechanics* Show is a true honour and Steve's winning entry is certainly worthy," said Nick Mowbray.

"Our October event celebrates the best machines from the 1960s right through to the present day and is one of the biggest displays of machines anywhere in the world.

"To be named best in show among this incredible section is a reward for months, if not years, of hard work and dedication and is richly deserved."

Attention now turns to the 2015 classic motorcycle calendar and the Carole Nash *Classic Bike Guide* Winter Classic which takes place at Newark Showground on January 3-4. **CBG**

STAFFORD RESULTS

BEST IN SHOW: 1966 Kawasaki B8-T, Steve Thomas **MACHINE OF MOST TECHNICAL INTEREST:** Seeley Moto Guzzi Dondolion Corsa, Graham Hemshall

PRE 1960s BIKE: 1 – 1956 Velocette Viper, Carol French; 2 – 1925 Neracar Model C, John Phyzackley; 3 – 1955 Benelli Spring Lasting, Steve Wood

1960s BIKE: 1 – 1968 Yamaha YR2C, George Staples; 2 – 1961 Norman B4 Sport, Graham Nook; 3 – 1961 Triumph T120R Production Racer, Lloyd Dickinson

1970s BIKE: 1 – 1971 Kawasaki H1A, Steve Thomas; 2 – 1975 Kawasaki Z1B, Dave Orritt; 3 – 1972 Kawasaki S1, Simon Lister

1980s BIKE: 1 – 1980 Yamaha RD400F, Steve Nash; 2 – 1983 Yamaha RD350 YPVS, Grant Jeffrey; 3 – 1981 Yamaha RD350 LC, Paul Halliday

CLASSIC RACER – GRAND PRIX DISPLAY: Honda HRC, Rich Grantham **CLASSIC RACER – BEST RACING MACHINE (PERPETUAL):** 1973 Yamaha TZ350A, Malcolm Potter **BEST TRADE STAND:** Wemoto.com **BEST JAPANESE BIKE:** 1960 Suzuki Colleda MA50, Heidi Cockerton

BEST BRITISH BIKE: 1968 Triumph TR6C, Noah Fernon and Graham Bowen **BEST CONTINENTAL BIKE:** 1958 Bianchi Bernina VL, Chris Hurst

BEST OFF-ROAD BIKE: 1980 Yamaha XT500, Andy Titterton **BEST STREET SPECIAL:** 1991 Yamaha RD350 YPVS, Chris Collins

MOST ORIGINAL BIKE: 1981 Yamaha XS650, Bob Gowman **BEST COSTUME:** Wax Jackets Cleaned **FUTURE CLASSIC OF THE YEAR:** 2007 Moto Guzzi Griso, Neil Branham

BEST COMPETITION MACHINE: Ken Ives' Honda S90 Trials, B&S Motorcycles **BEST SCRAMBLER MACHINE:** 1968 Cheney BSA Victor, Roger Simkin

BEST TRIALS MACHINE: 1989 Mecha Techno Sky Walker, Mark Kremin **BEST ENDURO/TRYALS MACHINE:** 1979 Yamaha DT175, J McDermott

BEST ROTARY (PERPETUAL): 1975 Suzuki RE5M, Les Bensley **THE RISING SUN AWARD (PERPETUAL):** 1972 Indian JC53, Jared Davies

BEST YAMAHA IN SHOW: 1984 Yamaha FJ1100, Mike Baker **BEST LOCAL CLUB STAND:** Acorns Motorcycle Club

BEST MIXED MAKE CLUB: Italian Motorcycle Owners Club **BEST NON-JAPANESE CLUB:** Ducati Owners Club **BEST JAPANESE CLUB:** Yamaha Classic Club

BEST CLUB STAND: 1 – Yamaha Classic Club; 2 – Kettle Club; 3 – Air Cooled RD Club

The Carole Nash

CLASSIC

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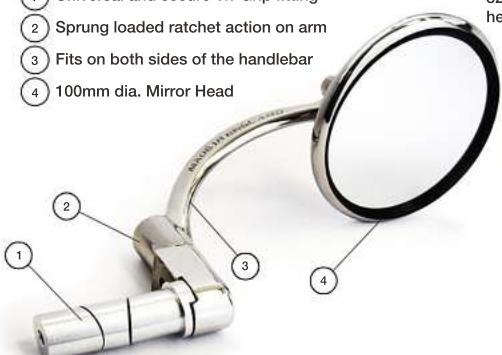


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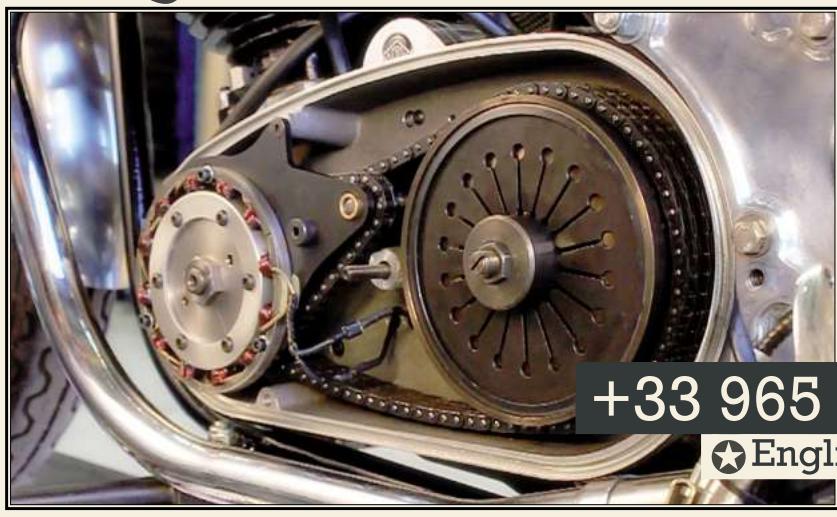


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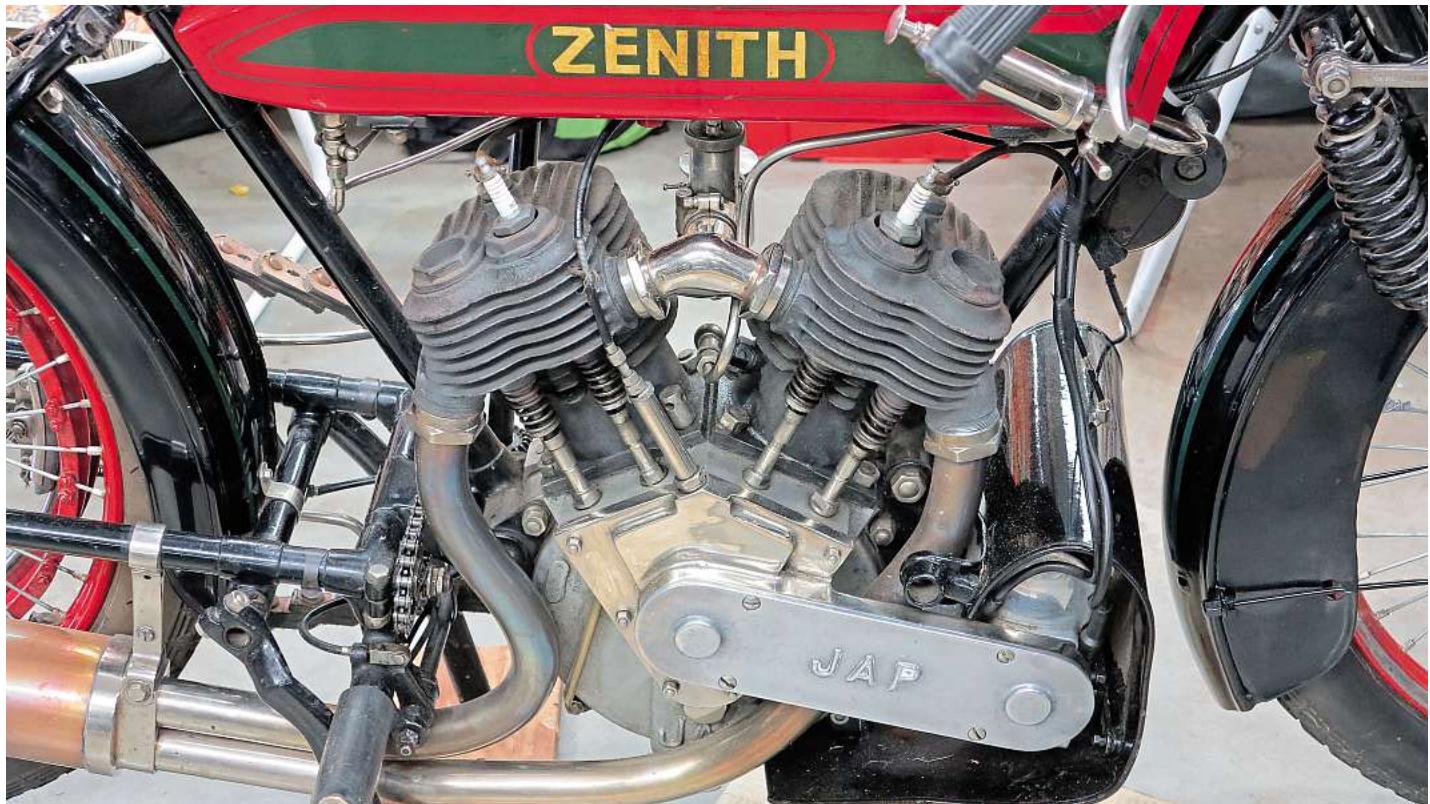


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Ardingly Show

The final event of the year at the South of England Showground escapes the weather to offer a splendid day out

PHOTOS BY GARY PINCHIN

THE WEATHER REPORTS weren't that favourable, but the rain held off until late in the day and the final event on the ELK Promotions calendar at Ardingly attracted a good turnout for what was a packed show, offering something for everyone, at the South of England Showground.

In the parking lot, an Enfield Bullet bobber drew lots of attention, thanks to its stripped to the bones stance, fantastic preparation, quirky detailing (like the superb oil tank, and brass detailing) all accentuated by girder forks and low slung, twin-shock rear end and vintage-looking Firestone tyres.

A neat B50 unit-construction BSA Gold Star, 350 Ducati single-cylinder cafe racer, a rather tidy GT380 Suzuki two-stroke triple and a pristine Kawasaki Z900 stood out among the ranks of more modern bikes ridden to the show.

The main hall hosted a great collection of classic and vintage bikes, including the bike voted Best Real Classic, a 1952 500cc Triumph Trophy TR5 ISDT owned by M Brinkley from East Sussex. The TR5 was Triumph's first production trial bike, the model was introduced in 1948 and according to the show information he submitted; "this machine is in International Six Day Trial (ISDT) trim. Used regularly on Club runs and classic long distance trials, and is still winning its class with the battle scars to prove it."

CBG liked the Zenith owned by Tony Donnithorne – a 1913 996cc JAP side valve V-twin fitted with Gradua Gear designed by Freddie Barnes in 1908 and used by Zenith

EVENT
OCT 25
2014

■ Ardingly is always a veritable feast of classic and vintage motorcycles, with a sprinkling of old French small-capacity machines to examine. Food stalls are great too!

until 1925. The large belt pulleys gave a variation from 3:1 in top gear down to 6:1 in low gear. The machine was rebuilt by the current owner in '64 and is used in VMCC events.

Best Club Stand went to the BSA Owners Club, East Sussex, who brought along a huge selection of machines – but the US-spec 1971 A75R Rocket III came from the West Sussex club. Re-imported in 1991 it was overhauled in 2001 after an engine failure and rebuilt with enhanced components, while striving to retain its original appearance.

A pair of modern bikes getting a lot of attention at the show were the retro-styled, single-cylinder Mash Motorcycles, brought to the show by Horley-based dealer T Northeast. The fuel-injected, 29bhp, 400cc, air-cooled, four-valve, sohc-powered street bike is designed in France by Sima but built in China (there's a range of smaller Mash four-stroke singles too). Imported through HQB Sport & Leisure Ltd in Andover, the Mash Roadstar retails at £3799 inclusive of VAT, but excludes on-the-road charges. Might be a lower-cost option than Enfield's Continental GT? Shame about the Mash name though!

At the other end of the scale in the autojumble, was a very rare JAP-engined P&P that looked very much the epitome of the term 'barn find', plus a fine selection of old French machines – mainly small capacity town-bikes, but nevertheless, fascinating to see something different to the traditional British fayre. 



EARNED A BREAK? Then what about.....

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... what could be better than dreaming of long, lazy days in the saddle, taking in the sights and smells and sounds of the world?

Actually, doing something about those dreams is better, whether your thoughts are of adventure and sunny destinations at home or abroad. For those in the motorcycling community, there's nothing better than planning a trip and taking a break on your bike. So here are just a few ideas...

White Rose Tours was established in 1996 and is a family company offering both motorcycle touring holidays in both the UK and Europe.

The tours cover everything from guided weekend breaks to fully escorted European tours, and for 2015 the team has a new tour to Norway and a fantastic two week tour to the Canyon lands of Utah. For full information find White Rose at www.motorcycletours.co.uk or call 01423 770103.

If you have Europe in your sights, the experts to call are at **Railsavers**.

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Bpuk, taking into consideration your riding style and taste for adventure. You'll be able to cruise along in style, enjoying unsurpassed accommodation – no expense is spared in ensuring your holiday enjoyment. Visit www.thaimotorcycletouring.com for details.

H-C Travel's India tours are undoubtedly the jewel in the crown of their Asian Adventures – and the longest running motorbike tours in the subcontinent. Kerala, Rajasthan and the Himalayas offer three contrasting destinations for adventure riders, and H-C Travel will again be working with adventure bike rider Tiffany Coates in 2015 to offer their unique women only 'Ladies of Ladakh adventure'. And if Asia isn't for you, check out their tours and rentals in NZ, Australia, South Africa, Canada and of course their Orange & Black authorized Harley-Davidson tours and rentals in the USA.

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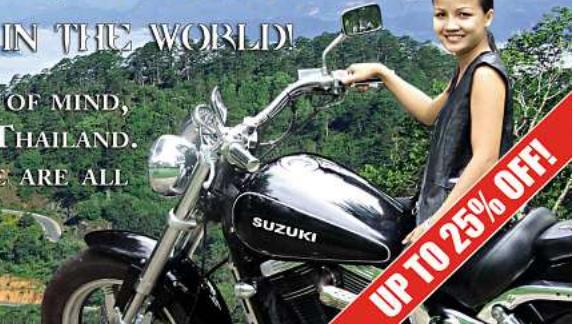
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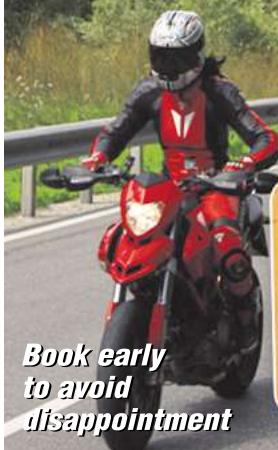
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Triumph Thruxton Ace

The Ace Cafe's special edition street racing twin

PHOTO COURTESY OF ACE CAFE LONDON



This special edition Thruxton celebrates Triumph's association with the legendary Ace Cafe in North London.

It features: unique retro paint and decal scheme; sculpted oxblood custom seat; authentic, eye-catching bar-end mirrors, unique handlebar plaque denoting its 'SE' status – powered by the iconic 865cc parallel twin engine.

The Triumph Thruxton Ace, was revealed as part of the annual Brighton Burn Up celebrations in September, when more than 25,000 cafe racer enthusiasts descended onto the Brighton seafront.

Unveiled at the iconic Ace Cafe London by Mark Wilsmore, managing director of the globally recognised venue, the bike drew avid interest throughout the Burn Up weekend.

The Thruxton Ace combines the evocative silhouette of a true Triumph classic racer, with an eye-catching, one-off pure white and jet black paint livery reflecting Triumph's historic connection with the Ace Cafe. The bike is tastefully co-branded with Ace Cafe logos adorning the side panels, tank and tail section.

Featuring the same engine as the renowned Triumph Thruxton, power is provided by Triumph's 865cc signature parallel twin from the Bonneville. Producing peak power of 69PS and 69Nm of torque across a broad rev range, the Thruxton delivers its performance with a suitable increase in the edginess of the exhaust note from the classically styled chrome silencers.

Commenting on the bike, Mark Wilsmore, managing director of the Ace Cafe, said: "This year saw the 21st anniversary of the annual Ace Cafe Reunion, so unveiling the Triumph Ace Cafe special edition was a massive thrill. Riding the bike into the cafe and on to the Triumph display will certainly go down as my highpoint of the year! The bike acted as a great focus for the whole weekend and helped us to attract around 100,000 bike fans to the seafront for the annual Brighton Burn Up."

The Thruxton Ace's chassis is based around the Bonneville, and meets Triumph's exacting standards by generating an assured, composed, yet agile ride at all times. Its steel tube frame, 41mm KYB forks, twin KYB rear shocks, Nissin disc brakes and wire spokes merge modern engineering with retro style to create a perfectly balanced bike. The deceptively sporty steering geometry gives the Thruxton Ace performance to match the engine's unique character and progressive riding position.

A contemporary two-wheeled tribute to an iconic venue, the Thruxton Ace revived memories, created new ones and turned heads when it was let loose on the Brighton seafront.

A range of genuine Triumph accessories are available for the Thruxton Ace to further increase its sporting look. These include a choice of two beautifully crafted exhausts from Arrow Special Parts, a brushed alloy skid plate, anodised for durability, and machined throttle body caps. Other options include alternative seats, fuel caps, and a range of chrome parts.

The Thruxton Ace comes with an unlimited mileage, two-year factory warranty. Service intervals are every 6000 miles, or one year, whichever is soonest. Prices for the Thruxton Ace will be confirmed when the new model goes on sale in UK dealerships in December 2014. Just 100 bikes will be available for UK customers. **CBG**



Former BSB champion John Reynolds will be at Newark show

Winter Classics at Newark

PREVIEW
JAN 3-4
2015

THE CLASSIC BIKE Guide Winter Classic at Newark Showground on Jan 3-4 offers a kick-start to the new classic motorcycling year.

It offers a welcome respite from the hectic holiday season and a chance to get lost in exploring the hundreds of stunning classics on display.

Guest of honour is former BSB champion John Reynolds and with a good mix of traders, dealers and autojumble plots, it's the perfect place to grab a box of parts and spares and get inspired to finish your restoration project for a summer of riding.

Gates open at 9am until 5pm on Saturday, and from 9am until 4pm on Sunday. Newark Showground, Drove Lane, Winthorpe, Newark, Notts NG24 2NY

Southern classics at Kempton

THE SOUTHERN

CLASSIC Off Road Show and Autojumble on December 6 at Kempton Park is predominantly for competition classics that aren't road bikes, but as the all-new Brough Superior 101 proved last year, it's not exclusively a competition bikes-only show!

The loose definition of show title gives show organiser Eric Patterson an opportunity to come up with a huge diversity of bikes. There will be 26 club stands covering sprinting, road racing, flat track, trials, motocross, enduro and landspeed racing – plus a 'live' element added with a selection of machines being started up outside.

There will be prizes given for every category, best stand and also best in show.

Ace Cafe London will be present with its merchandise and a selection of flat track bikes in 'Flat Track Corner' with Ace boss Mark Wilsmore presenting the prize for the

best flat tracker.

Mike Jackson, former successful trials rider and president of the Norton Owners Club, will be judging and presenting the prize to the best trials and scrambles category.

Also helping with the judging is Steve Linsdell, an engineering genius known for his achievements in building and/or racing quirky bikes on the TT Mountain course.

Guest of honour is Dave Degens of Dresden. A former racer, Degens took his Triton to victory in the Barcelona 24 Hours at Montjuic Park, in 1965 and for the second time in 1970.

With a huge collection of bike jumble also promised, it's an event not to be missed.

Doors open at 10am. Southern Classic Off Road Show & Autojumble. Kempton Park, Staines Road, East Sunbury on Thames, Middlesex TW16 5AQ. egp-enterprises.co.uk

DIARY DATES

NOVEMBER 29

Lincs BTSC Annual Dinner. Contact Bob or Maureen 01526 345720

Lincoln Autojumble. Hangar number one, Hemswell DN21 5TJ Tel. 07816 291544 lincolnautojumble.com

NOVEMBER 30

LE Velo Lancs & S Lakes, 11 for 12, Brinscall, near Chorley Tel. 01772 782516

DECEMBER 6

Southern Classic Off Road Show & Autojumble. Kempton Park, Staines Road East,

Sunbury on Thames, Middlesex TW16 5AQ www.egp-enterprises.co.uk

Rufforth Park
Autojumble
Tel. 07713 164848

DECEMBER 11

LE Velo Lancs & S Lakes, 11 for 12, Barton Grange Garden Centre & Marina, Brock Tel. 01772 782516

DECEMBER 13

Wetherby Autojumble
Tel. 07931 770494
Email: andy@ukmotorbikeshire.co.uk

DECEMBER 14

'Normous Newark
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Christmas Hamper Run, Roundswell Filling Station, Barnstaple. Taw & Torridge Classic Bike Club. Contact Dave 01271 343573

Dorset VMCC Christmas Run and Dinner, Leigh. Contact Rod Hann 01935 872528

VMCC Essex End of Season Run, Writtle Green, near Chelmsford.

10.30am for 11 start
Tel. Mike Plant 01621 779569

DECEMBER 27
John's Day after Boxing Day Run. Wells Classic Motorcycle Club. 01761 432856

Lincoln Autojumble. Hangar number one, Hemswell DN21 5TJ. Tel. 07816 291544 lincolnautojumble.com

DECEMBER 28

12th Classic Car & Bike Winter Restoration Show, Exhibition Hall, Donington Park, Castle Donington, Derbs DE74 2RP. 01484 667776 www.classicshows.org

Huddersfield Autojumble – Party
Phoenix Fairs Jeff Needham Tel. 01773 819154 phoenixfairs.jimdo.com

For more details of what's on go to www.classicbikersclub.com

While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy of the information in Diary, *Classic Bike Guide* recommends checking with the event organiser before making the journey.

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PAUL D'ORLEANS

CAPTAIN AMERICA AFTER ALL

The last remaining Easy Rider chopper, or the last motorcycle with identifiable DNA from the film, sells for \$1.62m

THE LAST REMAINING Easy Rider chopper, or at least the last motorcycle with identifiable DNA from the film, sold in early October for a record-shattering \$1.62m. That's the newsflash, but the comments section is jamming Google's servers with claims of fakery, eyewitness tales from unidentified friends of the film, an actor channelling the ghost of Dennis Hopper, and ordinary people who think the buyer a fool for paying so much.

It's rich stuff for drama around a motorcycle, far more interesting than if the Captain America chopper had been rolled off the film set in 1969, stored in a garage, and trotted out last month to sell for a monumental pile of cash.

I've had the dubious privilege of watching this storm unfold at close quarters, having just written a book (*The Chopper: the Real Story*) which documents the people who actually created the most recognisable motorcycle in the world. For my sanity, I didn't chronicle the inflated egos of drug-addled Hollywood silver-spooners claiming credit for these iconic machines, but dug around to find, as the title suggests, the real story.

As usual, the truth is fascinating, while the various fictions floating around Easy Rider are tired clichés. Most boring of all are claims by a washed-up film star that he designed the Easy Rider choppers, and hired a couple of (black) flunkies to build them.

Those off-screen gents who had the actual talent to design and build a pair of stunning folk-art masterpieces – motorcycles for the ages regardless of your position on choppers – were Cliff 'Soney' Vaughns and Ben Hardy. Neither of whom were consulted in the media frenzy around Captain America's sale; Hardy because he died in 1993, and Vaughns because, I would assume, he has nothing good to say about all parties involved, the film (which he's never seen), nor the bike presented for auction.

Ben Hardy was the master mechanic and genius chopper builder who'd been plying his craft since Henry Fonda's son was yet to be thought of. And Soney Vaughns was riding a blue Knucklehead chopper to Alabama to stage sit-ins at lunch counters years before all-white actors first played at 1% bikers for The Wild Angels, back in 1966.

Cliff Vaughns' take on the sale of the bike he designed? "I could use some of that money. And with all of this discussion (about the Captain America sale), no one has asked me." California, the residence and sale location of

the Captain America bike, has a unique law allowing artists to retrieve 10% of any sale of their work, even decades after it was initially sold, as a kind of delayed compensation for our massively inflated art market.

Most other artistic endeavours – actors, playwrights, musicians, authors – have an allowance for long-term payment in case of delayed or enduring popularity; such cheques in the mail are called residuals, but fine artists, and folk artists, have no such contract on the sale of their art.

California's law is radical, but it doesn't cover motorcycles, even iconic choppers reproduced on a zillion dorm-room posters over the years. It's equally radical to suggest that profits made on a chopper, whether the use of its image or the resale of the machine per se, should somehow revert to the original builder. But, as with most folk art, the creators tend to labour in obscurity, and their work reaps rewards for canny collectors long after they're dead.

Nobody from the newspapers or blogs (except, it must be mentioned, National Public Radio, which even interviewed me!) bothered to query the man who actually designed the Captain America bike, which is just more of the same for Vaughns. The continued whitewashing of history accompanying his motorcycle's long-delayed sale, certainly hasn't changed his opinion on how the American media deals with race.

Cliff was initially an associate producer on Easy Rider, suggesting the film's title and a few critical scenes, including an encounter by the film's heroes, broken down beside the highway, with a black 1% club, who stop to offer assistance. This scene was filmed, but ultimately cut from the movie: if it had been included, it would have radically changed the perception that choppers were a white man's invention and sole property. In the end, Cliff observes: "There were no African Americans in the film as actors or participants in the production." That's not how the film's ideas were generated, nor how production began, but it's how the film was finally presented, and still defines how the film and its famous choppers are seen by both the media and the public.

The rabid memorabilia collectors hurling wads of folding stuff at the auction podium never considered that Cliff Vaughns could 'use the money' from his creation; their greed, covetousness, and wishful thinking obscured all other considerations. Sadly, although Captain America's creators are now known, they've yet to be properly recognised. 

'Nobody from the newspapers or blogs (except, it must be mentioned, National Public Radio) bothered to query the man who actually designed the Captain America bike.'

WHO IS PAUL D'ORLEANS?

Paul d'Orleans is a writer, artist, sartorialist and photographer. He's best known as 'The Vintagent' for his long-running blog and judges concours such as the Quail and Villa d'Este, consults for Bonhams auctions, shoots digital and 'Tintype' photographs, and is curating an exhibit on cafe racers at the Sturgis Motorcycle Museum.

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HAD A BIT of an 'incident' while riding home from work the other week. And, gotta 'fess up, it was entirely my fault. I know, you rarely come across such disarming honesty in the biking world; it seems that, rightly or wrongly, most two-wheeled bumps and bashes are blamed on other drivers, the weather, malfunctioning machinery, dodgy surfaces or anything except rider error.

But, there, I've admitted it: I was an idiot. Filtering when riding through gridlocked London is a necessity, otherwise you'd get nowhere. But you've gotta be super-savvy, and usually I am. However, while threading along a choked-up Camden High Street on my Thruxton that particular evening, I lost concentration and aimed for a narrow gap between a bus and truck – both of which were stationary as I started trundling through the 'tunnel'.

It was an act of gross stupidity... and then the truck moved forward, closer to the bus. My escape route narrowed to a space little wider than my shoulders. I tipped off-balance and ricocheted between the two vehicles for their entire length, like a human pinball. After an eternity, I shot out at the front, mercifully upright.

I was shaken, and angry at myself for pulling such a daft stunt, although not half as naffed off as the truck driver, who caught me up at the next red light yelling "Are you bloody mad?". Take it from me: a polite smile and humble, "Yes, I think I must be, sorry" do wonders for deflecting road rage.

Thankfully, there was no vehicular damage and the physical repercussions weren't serious – although I could barely put weight on my right leg, which had taken the brunt as I bounced along the truck's side. For several weeks my shin sported the mother of all bruises. That the injury wasn't worse was solely thanks to my hefty leather boots.

It certainly made me think, though, and served as a timely warning against complacency: one just can't afford to let one's mind wander on any road – and certainly not on the capital's streets. Full attention required, all of the time. Anything less is a killer.

It's not as if a large proportion of London's road users aren't already hellbent on murdering bikers, without any help from us. My pet hates include the breed of arrogant cyclist who thinks stopping at red lights and crossings is beneath them, screams past on your inside even after you've mirrored, signalled and committed to a left turn, and believes the pavement is a personal off-roading course. I'm not that bothered about them damaging themselves – live by the

sword, die by the sword – it's the poor buggers they inevitably take down with them I feel sorry for.

Diplomats – identified by 'D' numberplates standing for, I assume, Disgustingly Dangerous Deathmongers – are also to be steered clear of. Get past 'em quick, or pull over and let 'em through; just don't attempt to share road space, because it appears 'diplomatic immunity' extends to driving like a dick with impunity. Several friends and myself have been hit by diplomatic cars, and have been shocked at the authorities' reluctance to take action.

One mate was airlifted to hospital after a diplomat knocked her off her 1965 Tiger 100 on the Marylebone Road, yet I recall the cops were reticent to even take her statement. A few years later, I was hit at a junction when the teenage son of a diplomat, who was driving his dad's D-plate car, turned right against a red light, across my path. Had I been on two wheels rather than in a van, I'd have been killed.

The really disturbing thing was that both son and father – who hadn't even witnessed the smash – then lied to the insurer that the accident wasn't the boy's fault. The location of the damage on the two vehicles clearly disproved their fabrication, but even so, such mendaciousness as to hide behind status in an attempt to get away with relatively trivial misdemeanors as well as dodgy matters of state leaves a nasty taste in the mouth.

Finally, black-cabbies – despite their proclivity to U-turn without first checking their mirrors – are angels compared with mini-cab drivers. At least the former undergo extensive training; observing the road habits of your average mini-cabbie, I'd be amazed if some have even passed an L-test. In particular, some MPVs belonging to one huge London private-hire company appear to be piloted by some of the most god-awful drivers I've ever shared Tarmac with.

Said firm recently went to the European Union Court in a bid to allow minicabs the same Bus Lane privileges as black cabs. Thank goodness it failed. The money it wasted on legal fees would've been better spent on copies of the Highway Code for its staff.

Of course, there are plenty of sensible cyclists, safe cabbies and perhaps even one or two decent diplomats on London's roads. My 23 years of virtually incident-free riding tell me there must be. Frankly, though, to jostle with the capital's traffic is to take your life in your hands. You have to be assertive – not aggressive – and it's not for the faint-hearted. Yet two wheels are the ideal way to get around the city, and I wouldn't have it any other way... **CR**

'One just can't afford to let one's mind wander on any road – and certainly not on the capital's streets. Full attention required, all of the time. Anything less is a killer'

WHO IS SARAH BRADLEY?

Sarah Bradley is a London-based automotive writer and editor. She's combined her magazine career with a lifelong love of ancient machinery, both two-wheeled and four, and owns a 1939 Harley-Davidson WL45, 1958 Triumph Thunderbird, 1962 Triton and 2007 Triumph Thruxton, plus an eclectic mix of classic American cars.

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MY FAVOURITE TOOL is an old Snap-On ratchet spanner that has been in and out of my toolbox practically every day for the past 35 years. I picked it up at the first boot sale I ever went to for a quid. It usually has a 3in extension and a 1/4 or 5/16in Whitworth socket on the end. Well worn, but not worn out, it has become an old friend.

For the past 45 years I have collected a lot of tools, the majority of them very high quality second-hand items that have been found rummaging through dirty boxes at autojumbles and most acquired at a very reasonable price.

My best purchase was about 25 years ago when I luckily met the elderly daughter of the late Bill Mewis, who was Joe Craig's chief grease monkey at Norton from the early Thirties to after the Second World War.

I visited Mrs Mewis in her home up north and sitting in her kitchen with children, grandchildren and plenty of cups of tea, I listened to stories of her famous father.

Eventually one of the youngsters brought in a few old metal and wooden toolboxes containing many spanners, reamers, special tools and old tobacco tins crammed with small nuts, nipples, bits and bobs. We agreed on a price and every time I use these tools I think of Mewis, Craig and the likes of Stanley Woods, Jimmy Guthrie, "Crasher" White and the Norton stars of yesteryear.

So it is important to have a good selection of tools at your disposal and hence to allow you to work on your machines. But it is also equally important to 'use the right tool for the job'.

Above the lathe in my machine shop, I have a sign that reads: "Use the right tool, do the job properly, test the product"

I read it every day, but I seem not to learn...

Last week I set my objective to rebuild a 1914 Norton Big 4 engine for a bike I am currently working on. I fitted it to my revolving engine stand on my bench, clamped on a timing disc to the drive side mainshaft and recorded the cam timing (this is important, for future reference); the exhaust was set to 15 degrees retarded!

I then pulled off the one piece cylinder head and barrel to reveal a perfect piston, rings and bore. Pulling on the con rod told me the big end felt perfect

and the main bearings the same. I had wanted to split the crankcase to have a closer look, but the half-timing pinion (which is screwed on) would not budge. Despite applying a lot of effort and using a variety of tools at my disposal such as a long lever and big hammer, impact driver, blow torch, and finally massive pipe grips (only kidding!) I decided that to proceed with this operation could possibly cause more harm than good; I left it alone.

I then turned my attention to the top end, a heavy and simple casting that combines the barrel and cylinder head and of course the two valves. I laid the component on its side and pulled out a valve spring compressor from my toolbox, it wasn't a perfect fit but it should have done the job or so I thought at the time! I squeezed up the exhaust spring, flicked out the collets

with a fine scribe and laid all the components on the bench.

I then duplicated the procedure on the inlet side, but just as I had removed the collets, the valve spring compressor slipped and like a rocket launcher the spring and bottom cup shot away. The spring hit a wooden block on my bench and came to rest just two feet away, but the cup vanished; I didn't see where it went and did not hear anything. I then spent the rest of the day looking for it, under benches, on the floor, behind a set of shelves, in boxes of other bike bits, in my turn ups, on the ceiling, in the spokes of other bikes, in the bottle of Chateaux Neuf du Pappy I was now drinking, but it had gone. Nowhere to be found.

It must have pinged off like a ball in a pinball machine or hit the floor and rolled to the darkest corner in my workshop. It had to be somewhere, but where had it gone? Had the devil taken it? I had just lost a 100-year-old piece of motorcycle because I had used the wrong tool. I spent 10 hours looking for it until I gave up and then spent half an hour making a new one on the lathe.

After decoking, cleaning the valves and grinding them in (stems and guides were in perfect condition), I spent two minutes modifying my valve spring compressor so that it fitted the bottom cup properly and reassembled the top end.

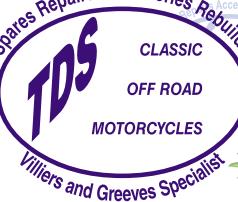
The moral of this story?

Be a wally or use the right tool! **CBG**

'Despite applying a lot of effort and using a variety of tools – long lever, big hammer, impact driver, blow torch – I decided proceeding with this operation could cause more harm than good.'

WHO IS GEORGE COHEN?

Dr George Cohen, MBBS MSc MRCPsych BA Eng, holds surgery in The Somerset Shed, and specializes in Norton singles. He's also a VMCC Norton Specialist, Bonhams Motoring Consultant, 'Doctor of Reason' and 'Soldier of Fortune'



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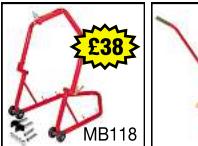
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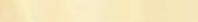
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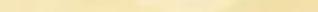














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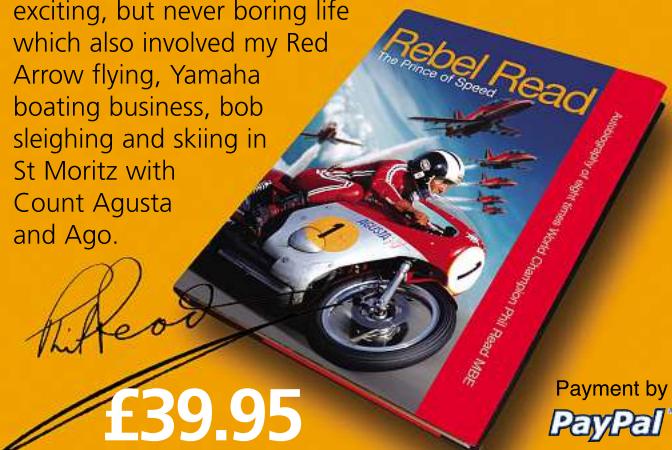
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ARTURO MAGNI

LEGEND

At MV Agusta, he oversaw the World Championship titles of Surtees, Hailwood, Agostini and Read. And then he became a motorcycle manufacturer in his own right

WORDS BY ALAN CATHCART PHOTOS BY ALAN CATHCART ARCHIVES AND KEL EDGE

Next year, 2015, will be a landmark year for one of the most illustrious men in Italy's rich panoply of motorcycle history, when Arturo Magni celebrates his 90th birthday. For even if he hadn't started building the streetbikes bearing his name more than 35 years ago, Magni would still have been a legend in his lifetime, a backroom boy made famous by the serial success of the Grand Prix racers he was responsible for creating bearing another badge: MV Agusta.

As the leader of the small band of men responsible for Count Domenico Agusta's two-wheeled Ferraris during their 26-year dominance of Grand Prix motorcycle racing, Magni was the driving force behind the World Championships won by such acclaimed racing legends as John Surtees, Mike Hailwood, Giacomo Agostini and Phil Read. During Magni's reign as team manager charged with overseeing the entire operation of MV Agusta's Reparto Corse, the red and silver



'fire engines' dominated the prestigious 500cc class for more than a quarter of a century.

Even in the face of Honda's challenge in the 1960s – until the FIM's short-sighted noise regulations brought that era to a close, aided by the huge budgets devoted by Japanese teams to beating MV Agusta with the new generation of two-strokes. And when that happened, after winning a remarkable 75 World Championships with MV, Arturo Magni took on another challenge, in becoming a motorcycle manufacturer in his own right.

Arturo Magni was born in 1925 in Arcore, a small market town the other side of the wall from the Autodromo race circuit in the parkland of Monza – a town that until 1993 was for more than 80 years the home of Italy's oldest and most historic bike manufacturer, Gilera.

Motorcycles were originally of little interest to Arturo, who as a boy was more interested in building model aircraft, then later designing and constructing the full-size gliders



with which he became a star turn at pre-Second World War air shows.

In 1942, he won the Italian powerless endurance title in his own self-made glider with a three-metre wingspan, though perhaps ironically his first paid job in those war years was overhauling engines for Italian Air Force planes, at Arcore-based Bestetti Aeronautica. "I worked there under Ing. Ermanno Bazzocchi, who in the 1950s went on to design many successful aircraft for Aer Macchi – later of course a motorcycle manufacturer itself, whose factory now houses the modern MV Agusta company – AC," recalls Arturo. "This is where I learnt the importance of light weight, aerodynamics, and engineering refinement, which came to play such a vital part of my life with MV."

Magni's job at Bestetti came to an end when the company closed in the wake of Italy's Second World War defeat, so he and a friend teamed up to start a factory in nearby Monza, manufacturing the espresso coffee machines then becoming commonplace in Italian bars, under the Atomic label. But competition was intense in this growing market, and after making just a hundred or so machines, Atomic folded – leaving Magni searching for employment. He didn't need to look far, for one of his gliding team colleagues had been Ferruccio Gilera, son of company boss Giuseppe, who found Magni a job working in the Gilera motorcycle factory in Arcore.

When Ferruccio's dad Giuseppe Gilera decided in 1947 to re-enter 500cc Grand Prix racing, Magni applied to be one of the mechanics chosen to help develop Gilera designer Pietro Remor's all-new four-cylinder racebike, which in due course would win six 500cc world titles during 1950-57 in the hands of Duke, Masetti and Liberati. But in 1950, Count Domenico Agusta hired Remor away from Gilera to design the first four-cylinder MV Grand Prix racer – and Magni went with him to Cascina Costa, as the fledgling MV Agusta team's chief mechanic.

His first task was to supervise assembly and development of Remor's shaft-drive 500cc four-cylinder GP contender, with its parallelogram rear suspension design which, 30 years later, would form the basis of the Magni-Guzzi chassis design. Though MV's lead rider Les Graham, the 1949 500cc world champion with AJS, liked the bike, it was too radical for the time and was set aside after 1951. The more conventional chain-drive machine which replaced it was honed by Magni and the team into a world title winner in the hands of John Surtees in 1956, although the following year Liberati regained the crown for Gilera. But after the retirement of both Gilera and Moto Guzzi from racing, 1958 saw the start of an unparalleled 17 years of successive world title victories in the 500cc class by the MV Agusta team under Magni's direction, particularly after 1959 when he was appointed to head up the management of the entire MV racing department, under Count Domenico Agusta's guidance.

Magni stayed in that job until MV Agusta retired from GP racing at the end of 1976, after registering no less than 270 Grand Prix victories en route to 75 world championships, including a total of 37 Rider's titles via Sandford, Provini, Ubbiali, Surtees, Hocking, Hailwood, Agostini and Read. ➤

ABOVE
Arturo Magni back in his racing days – clockwise top left: to right of #18, and in Pirelli overalls in next two pics and to the left of #73

OPPOSITE
Arturo in his workshop fettling one of the superbikes that bears his name

'Motorcycles were originally of little interest to Arturo, who as a boy was more interested in building model aircraft, then later designing and constructing the full-size gliders with which he became a star turn at pre-Second World War air shows'

'Alessandro de Tomaso liked the idea of having an upmarket, limited edition sportsbike to add depth to the Guzzi range, especially if he could make money out of selling us the engines to build it. So we built the first Magni Guzzi Le Mans in 1985'

OPPOSITE

Top left: Arturo Magni with his son Giovanni in 1998.

Other pics show various engines Magni used – and the ever-present style

During all this time, Arturo Magni was in sole charge of MV's racing department – Count Agusta paid the bills, but Magni ran the race team and supervised the entire technical operation, including the development of legendary designs like the title-winning triples, the later fours, the six-cylinder prototypes, and the abortive, uncompleted Boxer flat-four.

When MV pulled out of racing after 1976, Arturo founded his own company in nearby Samarate, northwest of Milan, together with his two sons, Carlo and Giovanni. To begin with, they concentrated on producing special parts for the shaft-drive four-cylinder MV Agusta street bikes, including chain-drive conversions and big bore kits to bump engine capacity up to 861cc. But EPM (Elaborazioni Preparazioni Magni) was also one of the world's first suppliers of aftermarket cast aluminium wheels, and in due course eldest son Carlo took over this side of the business on his own, leaving dad Arturo and his younger brother Giovanni – today 55 years old and now running the company full time after his father's retirement – to concentrate on the bike-building side under the Magni www.magni.it name.

Inevitably, the first Magni frames built from 1977 onwards housed the four-cylinder MV Agusta 750 Sport streetbike motors manufactured just up the road at Gallarate, for which Magni was commissioned to build the chassis. But the end of MV Agusta motorcycle production in 1980 forced the father-and-sons trio to find another source for engines – and who more natural than Honda, the first Japanese company to copy the Gilera/MV inline four-cylinder layout and bring it to the street?

Using the FZ900 twin-cam engine, the first Magni-Honda appeared in 1980 in two versions: the MH1, a budget-level Naked bike using suspension and wheels from the original Honda, fitted to a twin-loop chrome-moly tubular frame,

and the MH2, a fully-faired cafe racer using the same chassis, but with uprated Italian hardware such as Brembo brakes, Ceriani suspension and EPM wheels. Around 300 Magni Hondas were built in the two years of production, 1980/81, with by far the largest number going to Germany, where the bikes soon attained cult status.

This meant that when Magni's German importer asked for a BMW Boxer-based cafe racer, the father and son team swiftly obliged, and the result appeared in 1982 in both MB1 and MB2 guises, once again in both naked and fully faired form powered by the R100S flat-twin engine. The Magnis' experience in making the shaft-driven MV Agusta roadsters handle well was applied to the BMW, whose box-section swingarm and twin-loop frame, which unbolted to allow engine removal, set new standards for Boxer behaviour.

But the timing was poor: the bike's debut coincided with the launch of the four-cylinder K100 'Flying Brick' range, and the consequent (temporary) suspension of Boxer production – quite apart from the fact, says Arturo, that the Magni-BMW suffered from the 'Not Made Here' syndrome as far as German BMW owners were concerned. "They believed that, whereas a European chassis builder could certainly improve on what Honda or another Japanese company could produce, the same could never be true of their beloved BMWs!" he says. "We built 150 BMW-powered bikes, but it was hard work selling them, and the last ones took more than 10 years to dispose of! But now we understood that what the market wanted from Moto Magni was an all-Italian motorcycle, and with our shaft-drive experience, the obvious target was Moto Guzzi.

"Alessandro de Tomaso (then Moto Guzzi's owner – AC) liked the idea of having an upmarket, limited edition sportsbike to add depth to the Guzzi range, especially if he could make money out of selling us the engines to build it. So we built the first Magni Guzzi Le Mans in 1985, and have constructed over 900 Guzzi-engined Magni motorcycles since then. The peak years were in 1990 and 1991 when we built 170 bikes each year, and we'd have made even more if we could have obtained more engines from Guzzi."

Resisting the temptation to develop a chain-drive conversion for the transverse V-twin Guzzi motor similar to the one they produced for the MVs, the Magni company instead worked on eliminating the handling disadvantages of the shaft-drive transmission by adapting the parallelogram rear end fitted to the prototype MV Agusta 500GP bike which Arturo had helped produce back in 1950. This became a trademark feature of the Magni Guzzi cafe racers, and worked so well that American dentist-turned-tuner Dr John Wittner produced a modified version for his own BoTT/ProTwin racers, which Moto Guzzi factory engineers in turn adopted on their eight-valve Daytona 8V launched in 1989.

By then, the Magni range headed by the fully faired Le Mans with its razor-edge styling and square-tube







ABOVE
Magni built the frame for the
MV Agusta 750 Sport

chassis, had been expanded to include three further retro-themed models. The first of this trio were the naked Clasico and its half-faired Arturo counterpart, both launched in 1987 to evoke the 1970s cafe racer era, with wire wheels, stainless steel mudguards and a single chrome-backed round headlamp. Response to these models was so favourable – especially in Japan, which for the past 30 years has been Moto Magni's number one market – that in 1989 Magni launched the first Sfida, this time a throwback to the 1960s with a new round-tube version of the twinshock double-cradle chassis, and styling deliberately based on the GP racers of that era.

Demand for Magni motorcycles had by now begun to outstrip Moto Guzzi's ability to keep pace with supplies of the air-cooled 1000cc two-valve V-twin engines which had powered all Magni Guzzis built to date. This problem became so serious that at one time Giovanni and Arturo seriously considered switching to desmo power, by obtaining a supply of 900SS motors to produce a Magni Ducati. But, uncertain whether Ducati's then-owners Cagiva could do any better in maintaining a regular supply of motors, the Magnis decided to stick with Guzzi, says Arturo.

A small batch of 60 Sfida 400s for the Japanese market helped bridge the gap, but in 1991 Magni's Australian importer Ted Stolarski commissioned a new race bike for ProTwins racing, fitted with the fuel-injected high-cam Daytona eight-valve motor. Fitted with WP suspension, this first Magni design with a monoshock rear end was so successful Down Under in the hands of Owen Coles that Magni developed a street version which debuted in 1993, naturally called the Australia 8V.

In total 120 of these were built, in spite of the chronic shortage of Guzzi engines which Magni suffered from in the final days of the De Tomaso ownership of Moto Guzzi, when annual production at the Mandello factory declined to barely 3000 bikes a year, and building even a small batch of 20 motors for Magni became a big deal. But, after Finprogetti took over operation of the Guzzi marque, new company boss Arnulfo Sacchi made improving the supply of engines to Magni an integral part of his company strategy, leading to the long-awaited debut in 1996 of the all-new Magni Sfida 1100 cafe racer, which the father and son team had held back from putting into production until they could be sure of getting a supply of engines to meet customer demand. By this time just over 500 Guzzi-powered Magnis had been constructed in the Samarate factory.

But renewed problems with the supply of engines, coupled with the uncertainty surrounding the future of the Moto Guzzi factory leading up to its acquisition by Aprilia in 2000, led the Magnis to return to their roots by once again developing a new model employing a four-cylinder Japanese engine – the Magni Sport 1200S which debuted in the autumn of 1999. Weighing a light 196kg dry, 90 examples of this were built over the next decade or so, employing the air/oil-cooled inline motor from the Suzuki GS1200 Bandit mounted in a Magni frame hung with a set of cycle parts tailored to resemble the most desirable MV Agusta streetbike of the classic era, the 1970s 750S with its chrome mudguards, bright red seat, distinctively

I'm an extremely fortunate person, I spent more than a quarter of a century working on the most exotic and most successful racing motorcycles in the world, during which life was full of challenge and enjoyment, and no little success'



shaped anatomica fuel tank, and four gracefully curved separate exhausts which made the kind of music any lover of Made-in-Italy multis had by now come to expect – even from a Japanese engine.

It's quite ironic that after spending 26 years fending off Oriental claims on road racing's 500GP world championship holy grail, Arturo Magni should nowadays owe the continued existence of his bespoke bike-building company to appreciative and faithful Japanese customers who continue to underwrite the viability of a family company in faraway Italy which has so far produced 1600 complete motorcycles in the past 35 years.

"I'm an extremely fortunate person," declares the spry and active Arturo Magni, who even in his 90th year still visits the Moto Magni factory every day to keep tabs on what his sons – Giovanni, the mainstay of the company, responsible for its ongoing management and Carlo, now retired from Agusta Helicopters where he still acts as a technical consultant in between helping out at Moto Magni – are doing. "I spent more than a quarter of a century working on the most exotic and most successful racing

motorcycles in the world, during which life was full of challenge and enjoyment, and no little success. But then at the age that most men retire to spend more time with their families, I began a new career as a specialist streetbike manufacturer – and had the privilege of doing so together with my wife and sons.

"The restoration work that our company regularly carries out on MVs and other historic bikes keeps me in touch with the past – but under Giovanni's guidance, Magni looks ahead to the future, too, with a succession of new road models incorporating the latest technology, and finest components. It's the best of both worlds, old and new, and the fact that so many of our customers around the world have also become good friends, makes me feel my family is a very large one. What's more, it's constantly increasing in size, too – every time we complete another bike!"

The new Magni MV Agusta Storia, based on the Brutale model built just 30km up the road at the historic marque's Varese factory, but complete with all the visual reference points of the classic air-cooled products of the marque, continues that tradition. **CBG**

ABOVE

Top: Two versions of the Magni Guzzi – built with the support of the Guzzi factory

MAGNI MV

BACK TO THE FUTURE



It's hard to think of any company more entitled to produce a retro version of a current MV Agusta model, than Moto Magni, whose founder Arturo Magni was the architect of the historic Italian trophy marque's remarkable haul of 75 road racing world championships in 26 years (see History feature).

And that's what the firm's director, Magni's youngest son Giovanni, 55, has now done in going back to the future in creating the Magni MV Agusta Storia ('history' in Italian), a classically striking four-cylinder Streetfighter which can be built using as a basis any Brutale model from the original 750cc version which debuted in 2003, up to the current 1090 in its three different levels of tune and performance.

The Storia is available either fully built up in the Magni factory north of Milan at Samarate, a stone's throw from MV's former race HQ at Gallarate and 40km from today's MV Agusta factory on the shores of Lake Varese, at a price of €22,000 upwards for a brand new 1090 (cost varies according to the specification chosen), or else via a conversion kit costing from €8000 upwards, which can be used to transform any existing MV Brutale into a Magni Storia.

"I always dreamed of making a modern Magni MV, in the same way as my father did almost 40 years ago when he started the company," says Giovanni Magni with a shy but passionate smile. "And many of our existing customers were asking us to make an MV Agusta that was a blend of today's engineering with traditional aesthetics – a bike that recalls MV's glorious history but in a modern context, with today's performance. But I was always reluctant to do so because of the responsibility of living up to the expectations created by such a historic marque. I mean, you can't dare to even think of building a bad MV, a bike that doesn't meet the high standards set by that badge on the tank."

"But then Claudio Castiglioni (MV's late owner, who revived the brand in 1998 after a 20-year slumber – AC) passed away in the summer of 2011. He had always been such a strong supporter of what my father and I were doing, and I wanted to recognise that in some way. So after a lot of thought I began the project two years ago using the ultimate road model of the Castiglioni era. We started production earlier this year, since when we've delivered 10

'I always dreamed of making a modern Magni MV, in the same way as my father did almost 40 years ago when he started the company and many of our existing customers were asking us to make an MV Agusta that was a blend of today's engineering with traditional aesthetics'

bikes and have more orders for kits and complete motorcycles coming all the time. Seems we hit the mark!"

Magni has created a modern-day tribute to the most illustrious and certainly the most desirable MV Agusta four-cylinder streetbike of the classic era. This was the 750 Sport introduced in 1969, and built in limited numbers until 1980 when all MV Agusta production ceased, until revived in 1998 by Castiglioni with the advent of the current Massimo Tamburini-designed F4 range.

Ironically, from 1977 onwards all four-cylinder MV 750S frames were actually built by Magni, making the modern-day connection even more plausible with a bike that, back then, was both a performance and a style icon of its era, complete with its chrome mudguards, red leather seat, and distinctively shaped anatomica fuel tank. But hitting the bullseye with the retro styling wasn't easy.

"We rejected the idea of making a Magni frame for the Storia firstly because of cost, but secondly because the existing Brutale chassis is very good, and it handles very well!" says Giovanni Magni. "But it's quite a challenge to produce an authentic classic appearance using such an emphatically modern platform as the Brutale, because an air-cooled engine has a certain presence, whereas here we've had to produce an old-style bike with a new-style liquid-cooled motor which is very much in evidence."

Magni has retained the stock Brutale 1090 chassis and powerplant, but dressed this up with traditional styling headlined by the hand-beaten aluminium 21 litre fuel tank, ➤

OPPOSITE
Cathcart exploits the Magni chassis handling in his test ride on the new Magni MV Agusta Storia



'While that glorious exhaust note never entirely lets you forget what you're riding, it's only when you hop off the Magni Storia and check out the looks of what you've been riding for the past couple of hours or so, that you really get the visual buzz that it delivers so authentically'

OPPOSITE

The Brutale chassis and powerplant remain unchanged but Magni has dressed the bike up with hand-beaten alloy fuel tank, sexy, swoopy pipes, reminiscent of the old MV 500-4 pipes

whose design closely resembles the so-called disco volante (flying saucer) styling of the 1973-76 version of the 750 Sport, with tricolored paintwork that's however a Gallic red, white and blue rather than an Italian red, white and green. No, I don't know why, either, but that's the way it was back then, and this is how the Storia is today.

Note that pre-2007 Brutale donor bikes require a different design of fuel tank than current models, to take account of their earlier chassis design with the engine sitting lower in the frame, before it was raised for extra ground clearance. A new TiG-welded chrome-moly rear subframe that's both wider and slightly lower is fitted to support the gorgeous-looking very 1970s single seat with quite firm neoprene padding – passengers need not apply – that's gaudily upholstered in leather to match the fuel tank, while perhaps the Storia's most nostalgic feature is the one that all of us who craved owning such a bike back then were always most impressed by.

That's the quartet of gracefully curved nickel-plated separate exhausts with gently tapering megaphones that are just as much of a statement today as they were back then. You can hear their roar just standing still with the ignition off, though the headers are standard Brutale, including the catalyst beneath the gearbox that allows the Storia to be Euro 3 compliant. The four slenderly curved exhausts deliver both a visual statement and the sound of music any lover of classic-era Italian multis has come to expect, as well as a 5kg weight saving together with the 1kg lighter wheels.

In spite of using the Mikuni ECU's stock mapping, without any alteration to suit the different exhaust system, the Storia is still as ultra-rideable as the Brutale it's descended from, to the extent that you have a hard time when running in city traffic in fourth gear off the pipe believing that its trademark radial-valve engine measuring 1078cc in capacity, produces as much as 144bhp/106kW at 10,300rpm (at the crank), with maximum torque of 112Nm/11.4kgm/82.7lb-ft delivered at 10,100rpm.

As on the stock MV Brutale F4, the Magni's pickup from a closed throttle is smooth and controlled, though even more vivid if you really insist on wrenching it wide open exiting a turn, as the TC will allow you safely to do. The Storia is packed with low and midrange muscle, surfing effortlessly into a howling high-revving rush of speed that's

totally intoxicating. It pulls strong and hard on part-throttle from just off the 1200rpm idle mark, then wide open from just 2500rpm upwards all the way to the 12,000rpm revlimiter, which you have no business ever finding because of the meaty torque curve you'll revel in riding aboard the big-engined bike, with 115Nm of torque available at 8000rpm, and 80Nm already available at just 4000rpm. Anywhere between 6000-11,000rpm on the comprehensively detailed dash, complete with gear-selected digital readout showing at all times, will deliver serious acceleration and lots of thrills.

Yet the meaty power delivery practically discourages gearshifting, which is a pity. There's a temptation to just stick it in top and surf the waves of torque, in which case you'll find the Storia a more than satisfying ride – four ratios in that cassette gearbox would be sufficient, five more than enough, even if/when you do change gear, the shift action seems slick and smooth. Short-shift at around 10,000 revs and you'll find yourself right back again in the fat part of the power band, taking full advantage of the extra zip in performance that comes when you hit the 7000rpm mark on the brightly lit dash, when the radial-valve motor really takes off, providing vivid, satisfying real-world acceleration.

With its 1438mm wheelbase, the Storia feels pretty short, compact, even – as if your body is practically parked on the front wheel, and the way the slightly raised one-piece taper-section handlebar is pulled back just enough to deliver a riding stance that's comfortable while still being sporty, gives the Magni the air of a minimalist Monster with added attitude – and extra performance.

The fully adjustable 50mm Marzocchi upside-down fork and Sachs rear shock are plushly set up, meaning ride quality is quite good – plus being totally stable and predictable under the stellar braking delivered by the Brembo radially mounted monobloc calipers.

But while that glorious exhaust note never entirely lets you forget what you're riding, it's only when you hop off the Magni Storia and check out the looks of what you've been riding for the past couple of hours or so, that you really get the visual buzz that it delivers so authentically. This is two-wheeled classic eye candy of the highest order – and the fact that it goes quite a bit faster than it looks like it ought to, is all part of the appeal.

Back to the Future, indeed.... CBG

MAGNI MV AGUSTA STORIA

ENGINE: Water-cooled dohc transverse inline four-cylinder four-stroke with four radial valves per cylinder and central chain camshaft drive **DIMENSIONS:** 79 x 55mm **CAPACITY:** 1078cc **OUTPUT:** 158bhp/115.3kW at 11,900rpm (at crankshaft) **MAXIMUM TORQUE:** 100Nm/10.2kgm/73.8lb-ft at 10,100rpm **COMPRESSION RATIO:** 13:1 **FUEL/IGNITION:** Mikuni electronic fuel injection and engine management system with 4 x 46mm throttle bodies and single injector per cylinder **GEARBOX:** Six-speed cassette-type **CLUTCH:** Multi-plate oilbath slipper clutch **CHASSIS:** Composite design with chrome-moly tubular steel spaceframe attached to cast aluminium swingarm pivots **SUSPENSION:** (F) 50mm Marzocchi fully adjustable inverted telescopic fork (R) Cast aluminium single-sided swingarm, with fully adjustable Sachs shock and progressive rate link **HEAD ANGLE:** 24° **WHEELBASE:** 1438mm **TRAIL:** 104mm **WEIGHT:** 179kg dry **BRAKES:** (F) 2 x 310mm Brembo steel discs with four-piston Brembo radial calipers (R) 1 x 210 mm Nissin steel disc with four-piston Nissin caliper **WHEELS/TYRES:** (F) 120/70-17 Pirelli Diablo Rosso on 3.50in. Kineo forged aluminium wire-wheeled rim (R) 190/55 x 17 Pirelli Diablo Rosso on 5.50in. Kineo forged aluminium wire-wheeled rim **MANUFACTURER:** Magni di Magni Giovanni, via Leonardo da Vinci 331, 21017 Samarate, Italy www.magni.it





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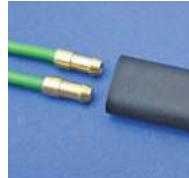
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NORTON MONOCOQUE GLORY

Thanks to Peter Williams' genius, the four-stroke pushrod twin Norton Commando was able to remain competitive on the racetracks when the Japanese first arrived with their two-stroke multis

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY PHILLIP TOOTH

The Isle of Man TT is the world's toughest road race, but that didn't deter Peter Williams. In his first race, the 1966 Junior, he piloted the Surtees Special AJS 7R into second place behind Agostini and the MV triple.

That was some debut, but a year later Williams was using a Lyster disc brake on the Arter Matchless when he placed second to Hailwood's drum braked Honda in the sun-soaked Senior TT after Ago's MV broke its chain on the last lap. Hailwood set a new race record at 105.62mph (170kph), with a new lap record of 108.77mph (175.05kph). Williams' race average was an impressive 99.64mph (160.36kph).

Even with only a single cylinder developing a shade over 50bhp at his disposal there was no doubt that Williams (PeeJay or Willy as his fans knew him) was one of the best riders of his generation. After three rounds of the 500cc world championship series, Williams and the Arter Matchless and Hailwood and the 84bhp Honda RC181 Four were in joint first place on the points table, ahead of Ago and MV. Then at the East German GP on July 16, 1967 he crashed and broke his ankle.

Meanwhile, in October 1966, Manganese Bronze Holdings had bought Norton from the financial ashes of Associated Motor Cycles and at the end of the year formed Norton Villiers, with Dennis Poore the man in charge. Poore put together the design team that came up with the Commando.

When he saw the Commando at the November 1967 London Earls Court Show, Williams was intrigued by the Isolastic system designed by Bob Trigg. The engine and exhausts, along with the AMC gearbox with final drive, swingarm and wheel, were attached as a unit to the new frame by three anti-vibration rubber mounts. Peter liked the way that the vibration-damping design broke with convention. And so, because he was running short of funds after his crash at Sachsenring, he took a temporary job for the winter months as a draughtsman at the Woolwich factory.

Williams got a ride on a standard Matchless G50 in the 1968 Daytona 200, but the ohc single was no match for the 750cc flathead KRTT Harleys, or the 350cc Yamahas and 500cc Suzuki twins and he had to settle for eighth place behind a brace of T100R Triumphs. He was seriously impressed by the 160mph (258kph) achieved on the banking by the winning Harley, which was in part down to the wind tunnel-tested fairing. Back home, Williams was suffering with asthma and really struggling. He broke down in both the Junior and Senior TTs but that didn't stop him thinking up new ideas.

Ken Sprayson had made a new lower frame for the Arter Matchless Mk.2, and Williams fitted pannier fuel tanks that allowed him to tuck down much lower than with a conventional tank. He also designed magnesium alloy wheels which went on the final version of the Arter Matchless – the Mk.3 was the first motorcycle to use mag wheels.

NORTON RACING COMEBACK

Norton Villiers was pumping out propaganda suggesting that it was committed to a racing comeback. Poore opened a competition department at the Thruxton race circuit near Andover – the Norton Villiers Performance Shop – where

AJS Stormer scramblers and Nortons were prepared under the watchful eye of Peter Inchley.

Any man who was both an engineer and a top-flight racer would have been an obvious asset to a motorcycle manufacturer with race aspirations, but the ageing Commando engine – it had started life in the 500cc Dominator of 1948 – wasn't exactly the ultimate in race technology.

When Poore offered him a full-time job as development engineer and rider responsible for getting the racing project rolling, Williams didn't jump aboard without first asking a few questions. He was assured that Norton was serious about racing and he agreed to move to Thruxton in the summer of 1969. Race shop experiments were supposed to be related to production line modifications, and that would mean a better Commando.

Money was tight at Norton during 1970 and there were only enough funds for production racing. Williams finished second in the 750cc Production TT riding the 'Yellow Peril' Commando behind Malcolm Uphill's Trident (the famous Slippery Sam). Even when company finances improved slightly in 1971 Poore wasn't going to throw money at racing when he gave the go-ahead to build a Commando for the Motor Cycle News Formula 750 series. Although F750 was an experiment, it was reckoned by many to be the racing of the future and it was expected that the FIM would soon accept the class as an International Formula based on production machines.

The first F750 Commando used what was basically a standard engine and transmission bolted into a new shorter and lower frame. It didn't use the Isolastic mounting system. After a hurried transformation from short-circuit scratcher to long distance racer by the addition of pannier fuel tanks, the Commando was ready for the Isle of Man F750 TT. In spite of a slow start, a slipping clutch and a broken exhaust pipe, he brought the twin home in third place behind the Triumph and BSA triples. Williams realised that, although the engine was competitive, the weight was too far forward and the suspension was wrong.

JOHN PLAYER BACKING

Then he heard the good news – in November 1971 John Player & Sons agreed to sponsor Norton's racing efforts. Like other cigarette makers they already sponsored motor racing and golf in an effort to boost sales after TV advertising was banned in 1965.

But Players weren't simply going to flash the cash at events – they wanted a factory team to call their own. For 1972 the racers from Thruxton would run under the John Player Norton banner. Norton Villiers was about to be transformed from a fringe activity into the real deal. Phil Read and Tony Rutter (reigning British 350 champion, later replaced by Mick Grant) joined Peter Williams, with ex-racer Frank Perris as team manager and a crew of five mechanics. Players insisted on Read joining because they wanted a big name in the line-up – as the Prince of Speed had won his fifth world title in 1971 he was the man.

It was announced that the JPN team's first race would be at Daytona the following March – that didn't give them much time. Their simple pushrod twin would be up against exotic 750cc two-stroke triples from Kawasaki and Suzuki – the fastest machines yet seen on the banking – and ➤

'In October 1966 Manganese Bronze Holdings bought Norton from the financial ashes of Associated Motor Cycles and at the end of the year formed Norton Villiers. The design team came up with the Commando'

OPPOSITE:

Peter Williams gives it the thumbs up after his TT victory on the monocoque

all-new short-stroke six-speed 350cc Yamahas for factory riders like Kel Carruthers and Kenny Roberts. Down at the Thruxton workshop – now renamed the John Player Norton Racing Department – they didn't talk about horsepower. There was no point – there was no way they could win a bhp race against the 750cc two-stroke triples.

Still strictly within the Formula 750 rules, the 1972 Commando engines had the standard 73 x 89mm bore and stroke, but were treated to the Peter Williams 'sine' racing camshaft and a 10:1 compression ratio. There was a new exhaust system and a Lucas electronic ignition, and before Daytona the Concentrics were swapped for Amal GPs. Spinning at 7000rpm the pushrod twin might have managed close to 70bhp.

To overcome the horsepower deficit, Williams proposed a 'mini' version of Bob Trigg's Commando using a low, light, and lean frame. Made from Reynolds 531 tubing, the new frame featured a wide-section top tube that ran from the bottom of the steering head to the nose of the seat, with a short bracing tube running from the top of the headstock to the middle of the top tube. This was the reverse of the production Commando frame.

The JPN would use the trademark Isolastic engine/transmission mounting system – Williams said that it improved handling and was the world's number one aid against rider fatigue. There was a new swingarm and different engine plates and the Norton front forks carried a Norvil production racer front wheel with a single Norton-Lockheed caliper and disc. A Manx hub was at the rear, a choice of Girling or Koni dampers.

A large capacity one-piece pannier tank, with a glass fibre cover, straddled the top tube and extended over both sides of the engine. This would lower the centre of gravity, but because the fuel would be carried below the carburettors this required a small mechanical pump from a Volvo that was actuated by the swingarm. Fuel would be transferred to a small two-pint (1.2 litre) header tank situated beneath the skin of the main pannier tank, just behind the steering head. This would feed the carbs by gravity.

The fairing was painted Ford electric blue with white bars like the Player's No.6 pack. Because it fitted so snugly, the Norton engineers had to fit a glass fibre 'helmet' over the cylinders and heads to deliver an efficient cooling breeze. Wind tunnel testing determined the position of the smallest practical inlet aperture in the nose of the fairing. There was a 'low pressure' box behind the engine, and air that had been heated as it passed over the engine was separated from the ambient air feeding the carburettors.

OVERHEATING PROBLEMS

During practice for Daytona, the GP carbs caused endless problems, and the engines were overheating. Amal's technical man worked on the GPs and Chevrolet power steering oil coolers were fitted neatly into the rear of the seats.

The JPN team was under no delusions – if they were going to do well it would be because the big Jap strokers didn't last the distance. And that's what happened. Suzuki and Kawasaki triples shredded their tyres and suffered mechanical problems, but so did Williams when his gearbox broke early in the race. Read finished in fourth place behind a one-two-three of privately entered 350cc TR3 Yamahas, headed by one-time Norton and BSA rider Don Emde.

Gearbox problems would continue to plague the Nortons for the rest of the season – although they had five speeds these were basically vintage boxes and simply not up to the power output and racing stresses. A heavy clutch with a triple primary chain and a long mainshaft caused the mainshaft to flex under load, with disastrous consequences. Different gear clusters from proprietary suppliers and specially made ones from Wolverhampton did nothing to sort the problem, but the bikes survived the Anglo-American Transatlantic series.

Norton knew it couldn't match the power of the water-cooled TR750 Suzukis that had been developed from the GT750 – there were three in the American squad – but Cal Rayborn's XRTT had the same problem. Interestingly, both Harley and Norton came up with the same solution of a slim profile for better penetration. And it worked, at Brands Hatch on March 31, Williams shared a lap record with Rayborn and Ray Pickrell's Trident – although most spectators agreed that the Hog outhandled and out-torqued everything in the three-race series. A new camshaft improved power low down without losing top end performance, but when Williams changed to twin exhaust pipes he gained an extra 4bhp.

That was a surprise because he didn't lose power at the bottom end of the rev range, even though the low rpm performance had been tuned to the earlier siamesed exhaust pipes. After sorting a few problems with the valve timing and trying different angles and lengths for the inlet tracts, the result was a 6bhp gain between 4000 and 7600rpm – an increase in 600rpm. Although there were no official figures, the F750 Commando probably made 68bhp at the back wheel, impressive for a pushrod twin.

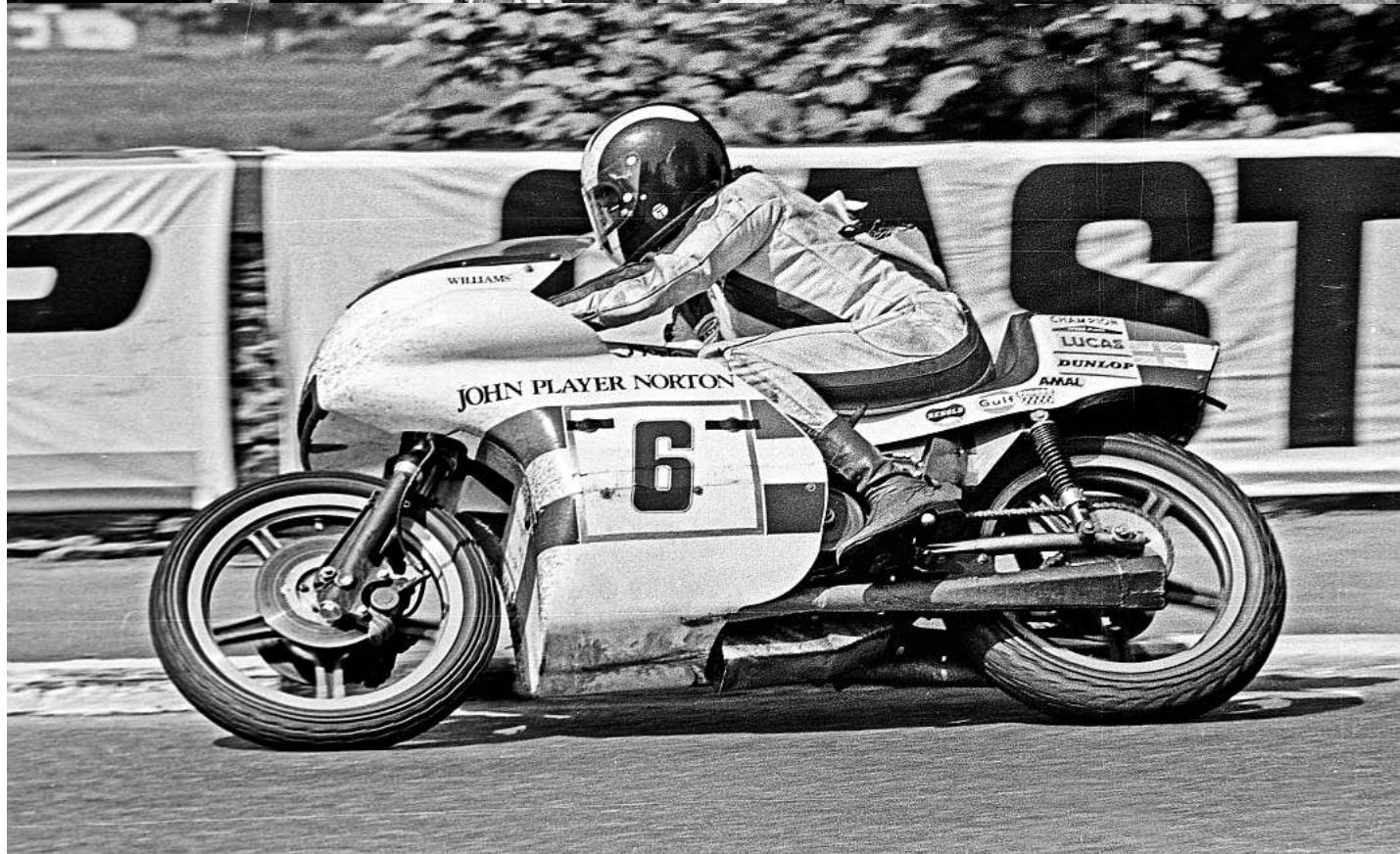
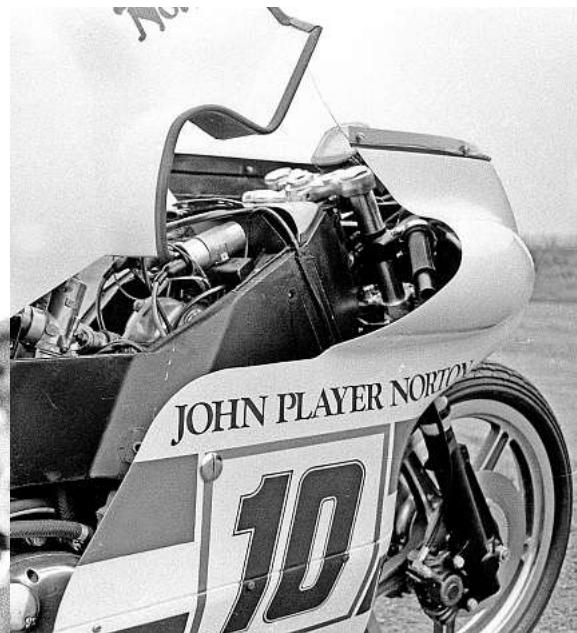
During practice for the Isle of Man F750 TT, Norton decided that a transmission shock absorber would be the answer and so reversed the Manx rear wheel and modified it with a cush drive. It also made a three-vane cush drive for the engine sprocket. It wasn't enough. The gearbox broke again.

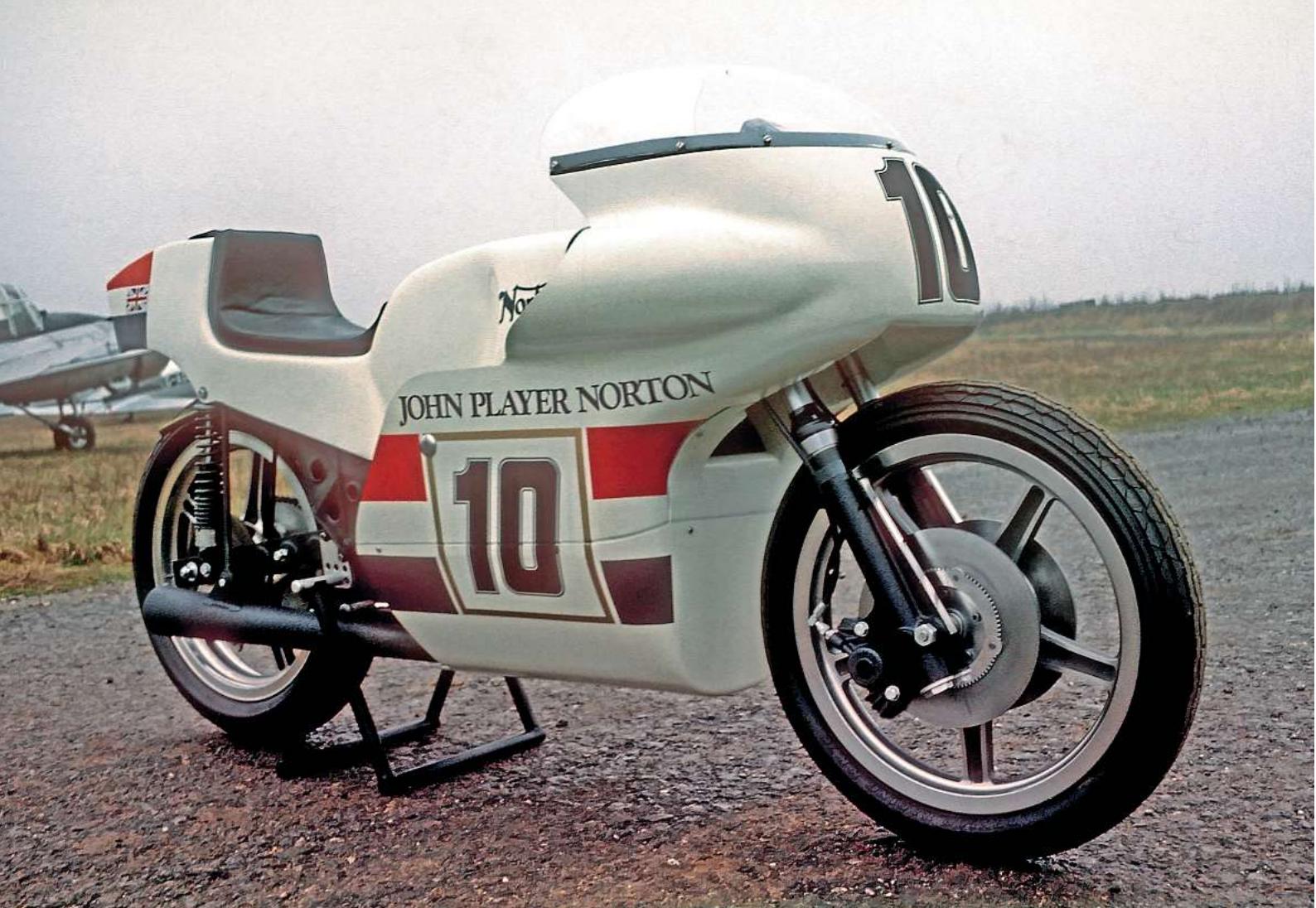
At the Swedish F750 race, Williams set fastest time in practice, but crashed out in the race. Things finally came good at the Hutchinson 100 which was held at Brands Hatch (run counterclockwise – the opposite direction to normal). He rode the Arter Matchless to beat Ago in the morning before throwing a leg over the JPN and dicing with Paul Smart and his Imola-winning Ducati. For most of the race they swapped places but Smartie always nosed in front before the finish line, but on the last lap the Norton rider gave it everything to win by a length. It was his first JPN victory and it tasted good.

But that win wasn't down to light weight and good handling. At 368lb (167kg) the 1972 JPN racer weighed almost exactly the same as a works Trident, and there was still some of that front end weight bias. On fast sweeping bends the back end would try to catch up with the front, but at Brands, where the rider seems to be constantly braking for bends and pulling through them, the front-heavy Nortons came into their own.

Converting to twin 11.5in (290mm) discs didn't help, and although they cured the fork twisting of the single disc setup, Williams thought that one disc gave more than enough stopping power with less unsprung weight. ♦

'Players wasn't simply going to flash the cash at events – they wanted a factory team to call their own. For 1972 the racers from Thruxton would run under the John Player Norton banner. Norton Villiers was about to be transformed from a fringe activity into the real deal'





Reliability was still an issue – at the John Player International meeting at Silverstone, the Norton team suffered three broken cylinder barrels, one failed main bearing and two busted gearboxes. Even a non-smoker might grab a packet of fags after that.

Those JPN bikes were actually better in a straight line than through the twisties – in the Superbike race at Snetterton, Williams' Norton would fly past a trio of Tridents on the fast straights but the Triumphs rushed through in the right-hander at Sear Corner. They could take him on the inside or the outside because Williams was struggling.

BIRTH OF THE MONOCOQUE

At the end of 1972, the team had to accept that the JPN racers were unreliable and didn't handle. Something had to change, and after one restless night, Peter Williams awoke with the answer – a monocoque frame.

This would be nothing like the classic tubular motorcycle frame and took the form of a double-skin box section which incorporated the fuel tank. Capacity would be increased by adding boxes between bulkheads to produce the monocoque structure, and besides carrying petrol and oil, the structure would give great rigidity to the steering head and swingarm pivot area.

The Isolastic engine mounting system was hidden inside the metalwork, with two Iso-rubbers at the rear. Because there were no conventional frame tubes or steering head, the riding position would be lowered, yet the engine was positioned slightly higher by mounting it in a more vertical position. The engine was also moved 1.5in (38mm) to the rear to finally cure the front-heavy problem.

The prototype monocoque was made from mild steel sheet – at one time, Williams even considered an adjustable steering geometry design that wouldn't look out of place on today's MotoGP racers – and even the swingarm was a sturdy steel fabrication. But all four race bikes would have a double-skin monocoque fabricated from lighter stainless steel, with a conventional tubular swingarm.

Weight was saved by using a new fork, incorporating triple clamps and shortened stanchions from the AJS scrambler, with new magnesium alloy sliders carrying the wheel axle in front and twin 10in (254mm) cast iron discs. A single 7in (177mm) disc steadied the rear. Magnesium alloy 18in wheels like those pioneered by Williams, but with five instead of six spokes for better load-absorbing characteristics, were shod with Dunlop tubeless tyres.

The camshaft, crankshaft, crankcases, cylinder block and head were all modified and improved. Power output increased to 80bhp, and finally the gearbox problems were sorted by fitting an outrigger bearing in a new inner primary chaincase and using a Quaife five-speeder.

After extensive wind-tunnel testing, the team came up with a new low-drag fairing that enclosed the handlebars, and a one-piece 'petrol tank' cover, seat and tail section. Air was ducted to the engine from a letter box aperture in the nose of the fairing, and exited through vents in the rear of the seat. Because wind tunnel tests proved that the high level pipes increased drag, the twin megaphone exhausts were positioned low and tucked in.

The fairings got a new look: mainly white, with red and navy blue artwork – the colours on a packet of John Player's No.10 cigarettes. Saving weight was always going to be a challenge with a Commando powerplant lumbered with cast iron cylinders, and the finished bike scaled 375lb (170kg) dry, and that was 7lb (3.2kg) heavier than the 1972 version.

TT VICTORY

Only one monocoque made it to Daytona 200 in 1973, and that hadn't been properly tested. Petrol frothed in the fuel

lines, causing carburation problems in the thin, hot Florida air. And the engine oil temperature was much too high.

The monocoque was quick for a few laps but then gradually slowed down and he went out after 188 miles (303km). By the time Williams went to Italy for the prestigious Imola F750 meeting there were additional ducts to direct air to the carbs and a separate oil tank was mounted forward of the crankcase. But carburation problems persisted.

Heat from the engine was reaching the fuel pipes and Volvo mechanical pump, which was mounted on, and operated by, the swingarm. The pipes were lagged with felt and silver wrapping, but it wasn't a complete cure.

The problem was finally cured during practice for the F750 TT in the Isle of Man. Williams reported that the monocoque performed beautifully for the first 11 miles (18km), but then the engine lost power. Someone in the team realised that if the fuel flow through the pump could be made quicker, it would absorb less heat. And so the bore of the T-piece feeding the float bowls was drilled to a bigger diameter, increasing the flow from 340 to 420 millilitres per minute. An air scoop made from a Shell oil tin was mounted under the fairing to cool the pump. But there would be one more modification – team mechanic Norman White recalls working with the Lucas representative to fit a car electric fuel pump in place of the Volvo one.

On his next practice lap the JPN was really flying and Williams arrived at Sulby Straight with the revs indicating that he was doing 160mph (260kph). He was going so fast that the slight left curve through Sulby village threw him over to the right of the road, and he hit a rough patch of Tarmac that threw the Norton into a tank-slapper. The JPN shook him like a dog with a rat, but fortunately the monocoque sorted itself out and Williams was back in control.

There were 74 starters in the five-lap F750 TT, with 40 riding 750s and most of the rest on 350 and 500cc two-strokes. The big threat to the Norton team came from the factory Suzukis, especially the TR750 ridden by Australian Jack Findlay who started first, with Williams heading off down Bray Hill 20 seconds later.

Findlay went through the Highlander speed trap at 164mph (264kph). It was the fastest speed any man had recorded in a TT race, but at the end of the first lap Williams averaged 106.58mph (171.5kph) to break Ray Pickrell's record from a standing start and was in front of Findlay, with Stan Woods on another works TR750 running third.

On his second lap, Williams went around in a phenomenal 21 minutes 6.2 seconds (107.27mph, 172.63kph). It was the second fastest lap ever recorded – only Hailwood had gone quicker in that legendary 1967 Senior, when he lapped at 108.77mph (175.05kph). Think about it... Williams was using a mildly tuned Commando engine, not a dohc 84bhp, 12,000rpm four-valve Four. ➤

OPPOSITE:

Bottom left: Phil Read, on bike, with (l-r), Team manager Frank Perris, Tony Rutter and Peter Williams. Bottom right: Read hustles the John Player Norton through the Daytona infield

'For most of the race they swapped places but Smartie always nosed in front before the finish line, but on the last lap Williams gave it everything to win by a length'

Behind him were Findlay, Tony Jefferies (Triumph Trident) and Mick Grant (JPN Monocoque).

Williams pulled into the pits after his third lap to take on 4.5 gallons (20 litres) of fuel and was away again after 31 seconds. Findlay pitted 102 seconds later – his thirsty Suzuki was using three gallons (14 litres) a lap and he would have to pit on lap four as well. Williams often said that he liked to win a race as slowly as possible and eased up a little to record 105.34mph (169.53kph) on lap four. Then news came through that Findlay had stopped at Quarter Bridge on lap five with, of all things, a broken gearbox.

That moved Grant from third place to second with Woods and the TR750 lying third. But nobody was going to catch Williams and he went past the grandstand with everyone on their feet and cheering him over the line. Grant made it a John Player Norton one-two by a whisker from Tony Jefferies (Triumph Trident), with Charlie Williams in fourth place on a 350 Yamaha ahead of Woods' Suzuki.

Williams averaged 105.47mph (169.74kph) to set a new race record. He said that the monocoque was amazingly comfortable for at least two reasons – the Isolastic system protected him from vibration, and the bike had been built to fit him. Asked in the winner's enclosure why there were no flies on his visor, he replied that 'all you have to do is keep your head down'!

SHORT-CIRCUIT SUCCESS

For the rest of the year the monocoques proved totally reliable – and, contrary to popular belief, they were easy to work on. After every long race, the bodywork would be removed and then the monocoque chassis, complete with forks and front wheel, would be unbolted as a unit and wheeled away, leaving the engine/gearbox/swingarm

assembly behind. A rebuilt engine would be installed after every long race.

The tremendous torsional rigidity, low centre of gravity and superb handling of the monocoque design were demonstrated again at the John Player International at Silverstone, where Williams lapped over five seconds faster than on the 1972 JPN, with the same engine power. In the race, he passed eight riders through turn one and outbraked another six into the second bend. Williams was more than a match for Paul Smart on the TR750 Suzuki... until he ran out of petrol on the last lap.

After developing the monocoque into a winner, it was a surprise when Norton decided to drop the design in favour of a tubular spaceframe – a move that Williams did not like. The new spaceframe was a proliferation of triangles made from 1 x 0.036in (25.4 x 0.914mm) Reynolds 531 tubing. Incredibly, the open-box beam structure, with the engine suspended inside, matched the monocoque for torsional rigidity. The design also lowered the bike by 2in (51mm) at fork crown height. The bare frame weighed only 16.5lb (7.4kg) and with a small petrol tank for short circuit racing the bike weighed only 311lb (136kg). So the spaceframe saved some weight but there was increased vibration, and that would impact on reliability.

Keeping up with the Kawasaki, Suzuki and Yamaha 750cc strokers would be well-nigh impossible on a racer powered by the ageing Commando mill. One year, two months and three weeks after his Isle of Man victory, Williams was holding third place in the Superbike race at Oulton Park when he crashed badly, suffering multiple serious injuries. Peter Williams would lose the use of his left arm and his racing career was over. It was also the end for John Player Norton. The tobacco giant withdrew its sponsorship a few weeks later. **CBG**

BELOW:

Williams was able to run with the two-strokes thanks to the development of the Norton chassis, way after the ageing pushrod twin was past its best





REPLICA MONOCOQUE

German engineer Norbert Prokschi desperately wanted to ride a 1973 Norton Monocoque but with only four ever built, the chances of getting his hands on one, let alone riding one, were virtually impossible. So he built his own

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY PHILLIP TOOTH

The tremendous torsional rigidity, low centre of gravity and the superb handling of the 1973 Norton Monocoque race bike meant that Peter Williams was able to win races against much more powerful machinery.

Norbert Prokschi, a 58-year-old German based in Aschaffenburg, knew the theory behind the monocoque. But there's a world of difference between theory and practice. "I understood, but I didn't really know," explains Prokschi. "There are only four original JPN monocoques. There was no chance of getting a ride on one of those – and I would never be able afford to buy one. So I decided to build a replica and find out how a monocoque performs for myself."

Unfortunately for Prokschi, he didn't have access to any detailed engineering drawings for the stainless steel monocoque. "I discovered that there were two slightly different designs, three if we include the mild steel prototype. The only drawings that I could find showed the outside lines of the structure from the left-hand side, and from the top in half-size. I bought a very large

drawing board and scaled up the drawings to full size."

All four of the stainless steel monocoques survive – one is in the UK's National Motorcycle Museum, the F750 TT winner is owned by Joaquin Folch and is in Spain, and an unrestored machine is owned by American Jamie Walters. The fourth bike, which is the same construction as the TT winner, was crashed by Dave Croxford. The chassis was made into a coffee table and a standard lamp by Norman White and the race team, and these were presented to Williams and Croxford. These components were later built into a running machine for owner Mike Braid by Richard Peckett of P&M.

In the 1980s, the museum monocoque was owned by Arthur Pine, an enthusiast who lived in Derby. Unfortunately the glass fibre bodywork was damaged in a fire, and so he commissioned replacements. Well-known Norton specialist Mick Hemmings later took patterns from this bodywork and a set of these adorned Braid's Norton.

With no other drawings, Prokschi took photographs of this JPN Monocoque and used them as his main reference. The monocoque structure includes three petrol tanks and an oil tank, plus numerous brackets welded to it. But how did the Norton engineers make the tanks stiff enough when they were working with stainless steel only 0.8mm thick? "I had to figure that out from the position of the spot welds that I could see on the outside skin and imagine the structure inside," explains Prokschi. He TIG and spot-welded the stainless steel fabrication, but this was no

USEFUL CONTACTS

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Mick Hemmings

www.mickhemmings.com



ABOVE
Norbert Prokschi's replica monocoque is remarkably well built and accurate in every detail

weekend job. It took him 400 hours to make the tools that he needed and to fabricate the monocoque structure.

Fork stanchions and triple clamps were still available because they are from the AJS Stormer. Sourcing them only took a phone call. The internal damping system is standard Commando – the 12in (300mm) of fork travel offered by the motocrosser would be a liability on a road racer. The sliders, which carry the wheel axle on a rib in front of the fork and the Lockheed caliper behind, are unique to the monocoque and later Norton racers including the Cosworth-engined Challenge. Fortunately Prokschi was able to source a pair from Mike Braid that had been cast in the correct magnesium alloy. "As you'd expect, the fork is far superior to the one fitted to the Commando!" adds Prokschi. The five-spoke rear wheel is mag alloy, but the front is aluminium alloy. Braid also gave him the replica fairing and tank cover/seat unit which had obviously been used.

After building the chassis, Prokschi needed an engine and the one fitted is an 850 Mk.III that came from an accident damaged bike. It had been part of a friend's stock of spare parts for over 20 years. When he stripped the engine Prokschi discovered a brand new big valve conversion that his friend had no idea about. "I got a bargain!" he jokes. But because the monocoque replica was

going to be ridden hard, Prokschi added a steel crankshaft, Carillo rods, Venolia pistons and a Megacycle camshaft.

The sparks are looked after by a crankshaft-mounted racing ignition system from Steve Maney, which delivered 2-3bhp more than conventionally mounted ignition systems. Maney also supplied his version of the gearbox outrigger bearing and a belt primary drive. Together with 33mm choke smoothbore Mk.I Amal concentric carbs and a megaphone exhaust system, the rebuilt engine produced 75-78bhp and revved reliably to 7600rpm. The five-speed gearbox is based on the Quaife design and was supplied by Mick Hemmings. Prokschi made all the levers and linkages after referring to original photographs.

This was no quick and easy build and there were numerous difficulties to overcome on the way. "You can get enormous satisfaction in building a replica like the monocoque," says Prokschi. "Even when you run into problems and there is no progress in sight, don't give up. It will be worth it." And besides the pleasure of looking at your handiwork, you get to find out what it is like to ride one of the iconic motorcycles of the 1970s. "Because of the low centre of gravity, the riding style is nothing like the other motorcycles I usually race," explains Prokschi, who also has a Rob North framed BSA triple and a Harley XR750TT in his stable. "And the low revving engine makes the bike feel slow, which it is not!"

"I'm surprised by how effective the aerodynamics are. I can see the effect as soon as I tuck myself down behind the fairing and watch the revs rise. And because the Isolastic system is located between hefty aluminium side plates there is no flexing. The monocoque handles superbly."

But perhaps the last word on Prokschi's replica should go to Peter Williams, who saw him ride at Donington Park. "As far as I can see it is a perfect copy. Dimensionally it is very precise," says Williams. "Prokschi is a craftsman par excellence." **CBG**

'You can get enormous satisfaction in building a replica like the monocoque. Even when you run into problems and there is no progress in sight, don't give up. It will be worth it'



DUCATI'S SKELETON IN THE CUPBOARD

At a time when the Italian company was revered for its four-stroke singles and V-twins – it also produced the 125cc Regolarità, a two-stroke trail bike, the first Ducati with a left-foot gearchange

WORDS BY ALAN CATHCART PHOTOS BY KYOICHI NAKAMURA

Lots of famous makes have skeletons in the cupboard, models they'd rather you didn't know they ever made. Like the 50cc moped and 98cc scooters that MV Agusta produced back in the 1950s, or Moto Guzzi's three-wheeled delivery truck – or indeed the smallest Norton ever sold, the overweight, unreliable Jubilee 250 twin, whose copious oil leaks stained many a British driveway. Or – but you get the picture.

So how about the last ever Ducati single-cylinder streetbike, of which 3846 examples were built from 1975 to 1979, that was also incidentally the first Ducati motorcycle to be built with a left-foot gearchange? I mean, it wasn't just that the 125 Regolarità and its later Six Days variant represented the Bologna factory's only serious attempt to target the off-road market, but it was also that contradiction in terms – a Ducati two-stroke!

It's true that, like the dozens of other Italian makes trying to carve a slice of the country's huge appetite for affordable personal transportation in the 1950s and 60s, Ducati had earlier made several eminently forgettable 50-100cc two-stroke models, from the Brio scooter to the Rolly moped, the Mountaineer high-handlebar commuter to the Brisk single-speed runaround, whose names alone defied all known truth-in-advertising regulation, yet which collectively represented the major part of Ducati production in the 1960s.

But by 1975 when the 125 Regolarità was launched in the marketplace, Ducati had moved on, and was now well established as the leading Italian four-stroke performance brand, with a twin-cylinder sportsbike range derived from Paul Smart's V-twin Imola 200-winner. The idea that it should ever have tried to carve out a slice of the admittedly booming 125cc enduro market for 16-year-olds, peopled by 23 other makes from Ancillotti to Zundapp, via Aprilia and Beta, SWM and Sachs (whose well-regarded two-stroke single motor powered much of the competition), Montesa and Fantic, etc., seems very, well, short-sighted, let's say.

However, it had the good fortune to see Frediano Spairani appointed as its CEO in 1969, a professional manager with an open mind as well as flair, who listened, learnt and acted on what he was told. Ducati progettista Fabio Taglioni and his colleagues managed to convince Spairani of the value of a product-led strategy based on the large capacity 750cc four-strokes that BSA-Triumph and Honda had just launched, underpinned by a factory race programme, and that's how the family of 750cc V-twin Ducatis that debuted in 1971, came about.

Unfortunately for Ducati, Spairani's success in spearheading the company's transformation meant he was appointed in 1973 to try to pull the same trick on Agusta's aviation and motorcycle business, which had also fallen under EFIM control – and his elderly short-sighted successor Cristiano de Eccher was only concerned with numbers, not product. So at his behest two new model platforms targeted at volume market segments were created that are today regarded as eminently forgettable postscripts of Ducati history – the 350/500cc parallel-twins, and the 125 Regolarità two-stroke Enduro.

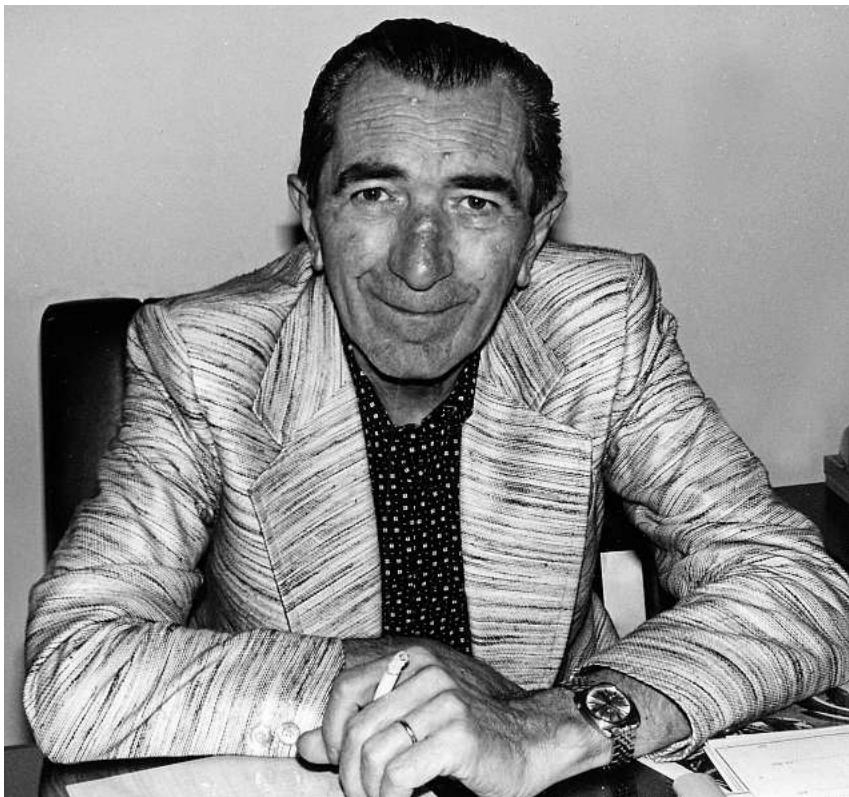
Italo Forni was Italy's star off-roader of the 1970s, many times Italian MX and Enduro champion in the 125/250/500 categories, and at various times a works rider for Honda, KTM, CZ, Montesa, Kawasaki (he was the first European to be signed by the Japanese factory), Moto Villa (for whom he won 36 races in 38 starts in 1972) – and Ducati. Today an active 61-year-old who's enjoyed a series of key roles in the Italian bike industry since retiring from racing in 1980 while still at the top, Forni was the man Ducati engineers recruited back then to help them develop a product for a market sector they had no experience of at all, but which de Eccher had insisted should be addressed in Ducati's catalogue – a street legal 125cc dirt enduro.

"Ducati contacted me in 1973 to ask them to help develop such a bike," recalls Forni, "so I went to Bologna to meet Taglioni and Cosimo Calcagnile, the commercial manager. Taglioni had designed an all-new single-cylinder four-stroke engine to replace the wide-crankcase Mark.III singles which were just then ending production, and he'd wanted to use this to develop a range of 250 and 350cc bikes for the Enduro market, to follow on from the successful Scramblers."

"So Taglioni and his colleagues in the Reparto Sperimentale decided to use the bottom half of that new four-stroke engine for such a motor, but to fit it with a two-stroke top end – and since they neither knew nor cared much about two-strokes, they simply used the most successful engine in the sector as a reference, which was the Sachs.

"That's why the Ducati two-stroke has the same radial cylinder head finning as the German engine, why the crankcase is very wide and heavy for a 125 two-stroke, and why the crankshaft and transmission are also over dimensioned – they were designed for a bigger four-stroke engine!" Launched in April 1975, the 125 Regolarità had an air-cooled piston-port motor with square





ABOVE
Ing. Fabio Taglioni

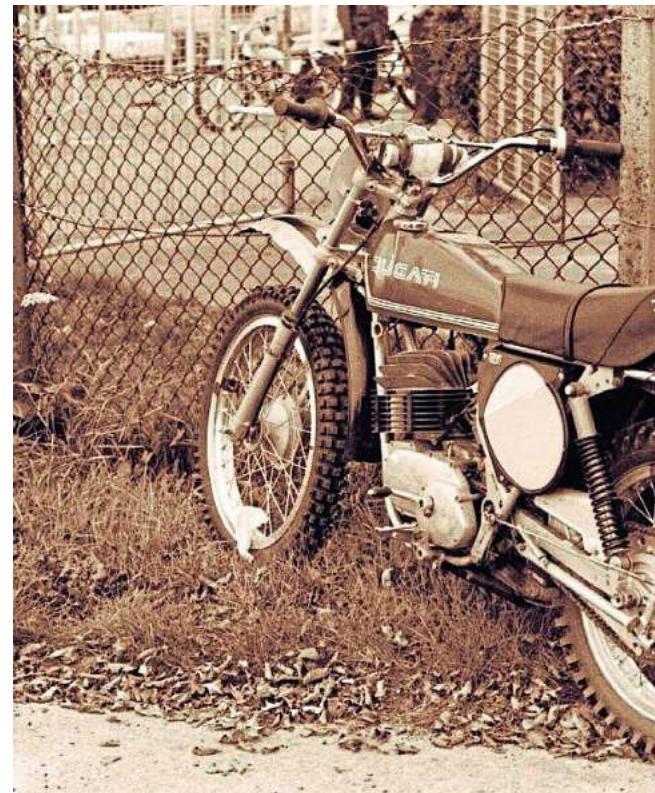
BELOW
Leopold Tartarini acquired the ill-fated Ducati two-stroke project and continued development to produce a range of Italjets

54 x 54mm dimensions, originally with four transfer ports and a single exhaust in the Gilardoni cylinder's cast-iron sleeve, then later with twin additional boost ports. Fitted with a 30mm Dell'Orto FHB carb with lift-up choke lever, and running a high 12.4:1 compression after the 10.5:1 ratio the bike was launched with had to be raised to give a much needed acceleration boost, the engine produced 21.8bhp at 9000rpm at the gearbox – comparable with the competition, but with a narrower power band compared to the pre-eminent Sachs motor it had attempted to copy, and maximum torque of just 11.8lb-ft/16Nm delivered at 8000 revs.

The heavy duty six-speed gearbox and oil-bath clutch – remarked on by contemporary testers as “quite capable of harnessing more performance from a larger capacity engine”! – were needed to coax available performance from the engine. For the 109kg dry weight was heavy by class standards, 10 kilos more than most of its competitors, plus the fact the 125 Regolarità was homologated for a passenger was advertised by a non-street-cred strap across the 850mm high dual seat, and there was a battery behind the left side numberplate to power the small headlamp with its sexy-looking but heavy steel grille (the detachable air filter was neatly housed on the opposite side).

The Spanish-made Motoplat CDI running 19° advance, had a flywheel generator that ensured the Ducati two-stroke motor could run without the battery, meaning the exposed ignition key on the left side was only needed to turn on the lights!

The enduro Ducati's twin-loop Verlicchi mild-steel frame was surmounted by a slab-sided six-litre plastic fuel tank filled with 5% mixture, which proved on the small size once



magazine tests revealed a thirsty 7.5 litre/100km fuel consumption, or 38mpg Imperial/31mpg US – high for a 125 enduro. The chassis carried 35mm Marzocchi forks offering 180mm of wheel travel, with at the rear a box-section steel swingarm with twin Marzocchi piggyback air/oil shocks with remote air chambers running 2.0kg/cm² pressure, five-position spring preload adjustment, 130mm of wheel travel, and a choice of three upper mounting positions.

But the routing of the fat Lafranconi exhaust (with detachable rear section to allow for repacking) beneath the engine was a real handicap, says Forni. “At the direction of the management, the first version of the bike was really more of a streetbike than a competition enduro model,” he says. “But Ducati owners love to race, even on a two-stroke, so it soon became obvious there were several changes we'd have to make to reflect this.” Yet the tiny 125mm Grimeca single leading-shoe drum brake with conical hub fitted to the 21in front wheel, was definitely undersized for street use.

However, the Akront alloy rims, Magura handlebar and levers, Aprilia switchgear and headlamp, Preston Petty flexy plastic mudguards with a small zip-up documents pouch on the rear one, Arieto numberplates and Nino Verlicchi spring-loaded footrests, were all quality components on an entry-level bike that was competitively priced versus its competitors at 868,000 lire inc tax – the Sachs-powered KTM GS125 was more than 20% more expensive, albeit 25% lighter and 10% more powerful than its Ducati rival...

Boasting more aggressive off-road styling with an eight-litre aluminium fuel tank and black-painted motor, the new bike came in two versions, Cross and Regolarità, each with revised porting for the new chrome-bore cylinder and



DUCATI 125 REGOLARITÀ

ENGINE: Air-cooled single-cylinder piston-port two-stroke with four transfers/single exhaust port **DIMENSIONS:** 54 x 54mm **CAPACITY:** 123.7cc **OUTPUT:** 21.8bhp at 9000rpm (at gearbox) **MAXIMUM TORQUE:** 11.8lb-ft at 8000rpm **COMPRESSION RATIO:** 12.4:1 **CARBURATION:** 1 x 30mm Dell'Orto PHB **IGNITION:** Motoplat CDI with 6v battery and flywheel generator **TRANSMISSION:** Six-speed with helical gear primary drive **CLUTCH:** Multi-plate oil-bath **CHASSIS:** Verlicchi tubular steel twin-loop frame with reinforced single-tube backbone **SUSPENSION:** (F) 35mm Marzocchi telescopic forks with 180mm of wheel travel. (R) Box-section steel swingarm with 2 x Marzocchi air/oil shocks with remote air chambers and 130mm of wheel travel **WHEELBASE:** 1420mm **WEIGHT:** 109kg dry **WHEELS/TYRES:** (F) 2.75 x 21 Pirelli Trail On/Off on WM1/1.60in leading-shoe drum with conical hub. (R) 140mm Grimeca single leading-shoe drum with conical hub **SEAT HEIGHT:** 850mm Akront aluminium wire-spoked rim. (R) 4.10 x 18 Pirelli Trail On/Off on WM2/1.85in Akront aluminium wire-spoked rim **TOP SPEED:** 119kph **OWNER:** Colecció Can Costa, Barcelona, Spain



altered ignition timing, which coupled with a new design of combustion chamber and piston with more squish, a larger 32mm carb, and compression raised to 14.6:1, delivered a healthy claimed power increase to 25bhp at 10,250rpm.

The weight issue was addressed via a chrome-moly frame, magnesium sliders on the Marzocchi forks, and measures such as a much-lightened steel clutch basket shot full of holes to combat the kilos, down from 1.32kg to 0.98kg. Dry weight was slashed to a claimed 99kg, which actually turned out in magazine tests to be 104kg, but the front brake was increased to 140mm in size, and most important of all the exhaust was rerouted to run up and over the top of the cylinder, exiting under the seat on the left. The price was however raised to a more realistic 1,271,100 lire that was comparable with the competition – it's doubtful that Ducati made much profit out of the 2786 examples of the 125 Regolarità it made and sold in 1975-76.

"The Six Days was a much more competitive mount," says Italo Forni. "It had an improved riding position because of a better shaped fuel tank and the tucked in exhaust. However, it was still rather fragile, and was quite highly stressed to deliver competitive performance, although by the middle of 1977, we'd begun to win races with it.

"But the sales had failed to meet expectations, so just as we had it coming good, EFIM decided to end the project! The original Regolarità model had lost Ducati credibility, in giving the impression the company didn't know or care about Enduros – which was indeed partly true!

"It was born out of a compromise, because the EFIM management wanted to have a streetbike that their 16-year-old customer could ride to the cafe with his girlfriend sitting behind him, yet could also win races – and in the 1970s 125cc off-road sector, that didn't happen, because there were some very specialised rival products. It was too bulky, and heavy to ride – it was quite old-fashioned by mid-70s standards.

"It had a very peaky power delivery because to get the necessary engine performance, they had to narrow the powerband, so there wasn't much torque, which in Enduro is a problem. It was actually better as a motocrosser, once we started removing weight, and those were the races I won on the bike before they closed everything down.

"Ultimately, it had everything it needed to be successful, but it just wasn't thought through properly at the beginning – probably because Taglioni hated two-strokes, and resented being forced to produce this model – although he did redesign the engine in 1976 to produce a lighter version. But because of the disappointing sales, the budget wasn't there to retool to produce it, so it never happened. If this had powered the Regolarità from the outset, it would certainly have been more successful than it was."

Still, that wasn't the end of the Ducati 125 Regolarità story – for in 1979 the defunct engine project was acquired from Ducati by Leopoldo Tartarini, the owner of the Italjet factory located at San Lazzaro di Savena, on the other side of Bologna from Ducati's Borgo Panigale base.

He'd raced for Ducati as a factory rider in the 1950s, before undertaking a remarkable 13 month round-the-world trip in 1957/58 with a colleague on a pair of 175cc Ducati singles, a trip which brought the marque untold publicity that helped it stand out from its dozens of competitors just as it was getting established as a sporting brand. By the late 1970s, Tartarini's talents for building

ABOVE
ISDT Ducati, Isle of Man.
Ducati 125 brochure

BETWEEN
The Ducati trailee certainly had style





Riding Ducati's ring-ding

BRITISH ENGINEER PAT

Slinn had a hand to play in two very different strands of Ducati's competition history.

While employed by Manchester dealer Sport Motorcycles, he worked alongside proprietor Steve Wynne in building Mike Hailwood's 1978 Isle of Man TT F1-winning Ducati 900. Then three years later helped him create the first-ever Ducati TT F2 world champion in 1981 out of a 500SL Pantah write-off, which Tony Rutter then rode to victory in the Isle of Man TT as the first of four TT F2 world title successes on desmo V-twins, latterly with factory-supplied Verlicchi-framed 600TT2 racers which Slinn race-prepared.

But before that, in 1964, while working in the BSA factory's competition shop, Slinn – an adept enduro rider since an early age – rode a B40 British Army military prototype in the

1964 ISDT, held in the DDR, where he gained a gold medal.

"Not surprisingly, it was one of the bikes most photographed by local East Germans, who were probably all Stasi members!" recalls Pat. Two years later in Sweden, he repeated his gold medal success – this time with a factory B44 Victor that he'd built in his spare time.

Although work commitments, including a three year stint in Germany working as a troubleshooter with the local BSA importer, meant he had no time to add to that tally by the time BSA went under in 1973, Slinn had considerable off-road experience by the time he joined British Ducati importers Coburn & Hughes as service manager in 1974.

"I got to be friends with the Italian engineers, so they knew about my ISDT experience," says Pat.

"They'd just introduced this 125 Regolarità two-stroke enduro model they wanted to promote, and since the 1975 ISDT was going to be held in the Isle of Man, they asked Coburn & Hughes to let me ride one for them in that. We didn't import them into the UK, because there was no market here for that kind of bike, but they gave the okay. So I went over to the factory, met up with Italo Forni who was the guy they'd hired to develop it for them, and went riding it for a day with him up in the hills near Parma.

"It was quite different from anything I'd ridden before, but I liked the way it handled – the Italians thought it was a bit heavy, but they'd not grown up racing BSA pushrod singles! My problem was the power delivery – it had no power at all low down, not much more in the midrange – but

then about 2000 revs from redline it took off like a rocket, and you just hoped you could hang on tight when it did so. It was an easy bike to wheelie, and that sort of power delivery was fine for hard, dry surfaces like you get in Italy, but I knew we'd have trouble in the kind of damp, wet going that's typical in the Isle of Man in September.

"So I tried to make them understand they had to soften the power delivery to give it more traction and better rideability in sticky conditions. To their credit, they did a lot of development on ignition and port timing, and by the time we met up in the Island for the Six Days, it was quite a nice little bike they'd brought over for me to ride."

So, Slinn was all set to complete a personal hat-trick of ISDT gold medals with the Italian 125 enduro, was he, then? Well

– nearly, but not quite....

"It was the third day, the Thursday, and everything was going okay – I was on gold medal schedule, well up on time," recalls Pat.

"We were in the north of the Island, up near Ramsey, and I remember I was riding flat out in top gear – when it seized solid! I woke up much later and I thought I was dead – I was lying on a bed, everything was green and misty, and it took me a while to realise that I wasn't actually in heaven, but in Ramsey Cottage Hospital where the walls and ceiling were all painted that same sickly colour!

"It turned out the crankpin had locked up, so when Ducati rebuilt the engine they did so with more clearance on the bottom end, which was a mod they obviously adopted on the customer bikes, too. See, racing improves the breed!"



good-looking, fine-handling bikes of all capacities under the Italjet label – most notably the acclaimed Triumph Bonneville-engined 650 Grifon – were well established, leading to a close collaboration with Ducati, for which he styled all the Mark.III singles, including the iconic Scrambler, as well as Taglioni's new range of 750cc V-twins, most notably the iconic 750SS desmo Imola replica. The lean, cobby looks of this most desirable of bevel-drive Ducatis were entirely owed to Tartarini, a self-effacingly modest forerunner of Massimo Tamburini and Pierre Terblanche, who could ride as hard and as well as he wielded a pencil.

"Ducati in those days was mainly an engine manufacturer," Tartarini explains, "so they had no design studio and only a very limited production capacity for complete motorcycles, because they were too busy building diesel engines for automotive and industrial use, alongside the bikes. Because of my earlier connections with the firm, Italjet was called on to design not only the street singles, but all the early Ducati V-twins, based on Ing. Taglioni's engine and chassis layout. Then, later in the decade, we not only designed the frame and the styling for the range of Ducati parallel-twins, but actually manufactured the bikes ourselves in the Italjet factory in San Lazzaro, using engines trucked across town from Ducati."

This close relationship, and the demise of the Enduro project, meant that Italjet was able to acquire the 125cc two-stroke engine design in all its various forms from Ducati, badged with its own name for use in various models – and doing so neatly squared the circle for company boss Leopoldo Tartarini. "I was aware of the Regolarità's engine from its four-stroke origins," he explains, "so I knew it had a very strong bottom end design that was capable of handling a lot more power, whether two- or four-stroke in derivation, in the category I wanted Italjet to attack – this was

OPPOSITE
Cathcart stylin' it on the road and dirt tracks with the Ducati two-stroke

Pat Slinn was able to buy his rebuilt Ducati ISDT mount, bearing engine number DI 125*130074 fitted in frame number DM125C*130167, registered it in the UK with a British plate LRO 809P, and rode it in British events for the next couple of years, gaining a Finishers Award in the tough Welsh Two Days Trial, then fourth overall in the gruelling ISCA Enduro, also held in Wales. But his best result with the 125 Ducati came in his last ride aboard it, when he won the Expert class in the British Army Enduro Championships on Pirbright Heath in Surrey, before selling it.

By the mid-1980s it had ended up as some family's funbike, but was fortunately acquired by Ducati specialist Mick Walker, who recognised what it was and restored it to the present original

condition, before passing it on to an Italian bike enthusiast in Ireland.

From there, in 2000 it joined the magnificent collection of more than a dozen factory Ducatis of all types housed in the Colecció Can Costa in Barcelona, where it joined an example of each of the very different 125cc road racers the Bologna factory made in the 1950s – a 125 Grand Prix customer bike, a works 125 Desmo single, and the ex-Franco Villa/Bruno Spaggiari 125 Desmo twin. But that's another story...

However, thanks to the owner of the bike, Joaquin Folch, I was able to spend an hour or so riding the restored ex-ISDT 125 Regolarità fairly gently off-road around his country property outside Barcelona, and in something approaching anger on the roads outside. In doing so, I

registered a personal milestone by riding a Ducati two-stroke for the first time ever in a ducatista lifetime – as well as discovering that everything I'd been told by the likes of Italo Forni and Pat Slinn about the bike being hard to ride was absolutely true!

After you've coaxed it into life, via the right-foot kickstart, and been rewarded with a spray of blue smoke from the fat Lafranconi exhaust that was a trademark of the bike even when new, the problem is the power delivery, which is worthy of a two-stroke GP racer of the era.

First gear is long, so the trick is to hold it what seems an unduly long time, before clicking swiftly through the six-speed gearbox's very precise one-down left-foot gearshift – the first ever on a Ducati motorcycle. You can feel when the power starts to

tail off that you've passed the 9000rpm power peak and it's time to shift up – but it is important to rev it right out in the gears to get worthwhile acceleration.

Top gear is also very long, so the idea is to max out acceleration by revving it hard in the gears, then hope you're going fast enough to pull that sixth gear in more relaxed lop-along mode. The engine is pretty raucous-sounding but quite well-balanced – there isn't an excessive level of vibration.

With chunky period Pirelli rubber on the Akront rims, there was good grip trailbliking off-road through the Folch orchards, at the expense of on-road feedback in turns – those trips to the beach or disco with his best girl sitting behind him have been a little fraught for Ducati's 16-year-old target customer, if it came to getting it on

with anyone aboard a Tarmac-focused mini-sportsbike. Those small brakes don't give much confidence in street use – having zero engine braking on tap, you need to squeeze very hard indeed to anchor up to avoid a Barcelona taxi making an unscheduled and un-signalled stop to pick up a fare.

Almost 40 years on from when the 125 Regolarità was launched, we have a clearer idea nowadays of what we expect a Ducati to be – and it's not like this. Look – maybe it's just as well the last Ducati two-stroke ever made was a flop. Or else, instead of a succession of glorious desmo V-twin Superbikes, Ducati might have gone the Aprilia route, and built a succession of two-stroke 125/250 GP road racers and off-rovers. Yes, definitely a good thing, then...!



ABOVE

Made to get dirty maybe but Ducati still focussed on gorgeous styling when they designed the two-stroke trailie

BELOW

Italo Forni worked with Franco Farne to develop the four-stroke enduro for Moto Trans

the Trials sector, that was then gaining fast in popularity.

"So early in 1979 I therefore acquired all the Regolarità's engine drawings and patterns, and modified it to produce three new engines all using the same Ducati 125cc base – a 350 two-stroke, a 250 two-stroke, and a dry sump 350 four-stroke with a single overhead camshaft that delivered 38bhp. I used this in the Italjet Scott trials bike that debuted in 1983, of which we made about 100 examples, and Taglioni was especially pleased to see this, because it represented the form in which he had always intended the engine to appear."

However, three years before this 80 x 64mm 322cc four-stroke version that was more of a trailbike than a trials bike appeared, the 250cc/350cc two-stroke variants had made their debut in Italjet's distinctive bright green Trials models which appeared in 1980 alongside a pair of Minarelli-powered 50/125cc models. Italjet had previously been the Italian importer for Bultaco, for whom 20-year-old American Bernie Schreiber had won the 1979 World Trials Championship, but with the Spanish firm bankrupted by rising debt and political uncertainty, Schreiber moved to Italy to develop the new Italjet bikes.

He finished second to Montesa's Ulf Karlsson in the 1980 World series on a 326cc version powered by a larger capacity version of the six-speed Ducati-based engine measuring 83.2 x 60mm – a smaller 71mm-bore 237cc version was also developed, and both offered for sale, with around 1000 examples in all built and sold, according to Tartarini.

For 1981, Italjet produced an improved, lighter version, of the T350, but Schreiber could only finish sixth in the world championship, and his move to the rival SWM concern marked the end of Italjet's world series involvement. It was also the end of the road for the Ducati two-stroke project –

and in doing so, it actually ended up coming home because it was Italjet boss Leopoldo Tartarini who designed the original 125 Regolarità for Ducati!

"I did it over a long weekend late in 1974," recalls Leopoldo, "and the man who helped me design it was Joe Berliner, Ducati's American importer. At that stage there was a chance that he might import it into the USA, where the two-stroke Enduro market was now an important market sector, so he worked with me in styling it – he was very intelligent and passionate about design, maybe surprisingly so for such a hard-headed businessman. But in the end they decided just to concentrate on the V-twins – but we created the Regolarità together!"

But that's not quite the end of this multi-faceted story – for as Italo Forni recounts, in 1975 he and Ducati R&D engineer Franco Farnè developed a four-stroke Enduro model for Ducati's Spanish affiliate Mototrans, complete with disc brakes, monoshock frame, and an all-new 500cc bevel-drive sohc engine which Taglioni had produced, using many parts and much technology from the 864cc version of the V-twin engine that was by then in production.

This four-stroke Enduro was conceived one year before the XT500 Yamaha appeared which duly became the class benchmark, and was apparently a very small, light, advanced design which was not much bigger than a 125 Husqvarna. "We built two prototypes which went to Spain, but the reason it never entered production was because of Mototrans closing down," says Forni. "This was a very good bike which predated the arrival of the four-stroke Enduro boom – ironically, the EFIM guy who insisted that Ducati should build an Enduro bike got it right, but he should have let Taglioni do it the Ducati way and build a four-stroke, in which case they would have led the world!" If only....! **CBG**



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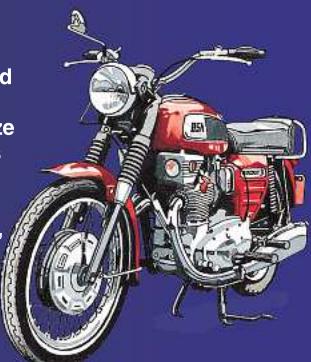


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COLOURFUL HISTORY

This 1958 BSA 500cc A7 was used in a bank raid, for diplomatic duties and is now a well-travelled, cared-for classic

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY KEITH FRYER





It's not often I meet a motorcycle that may have been involved in a bank robbery or attached to a foreign embassy, but this modest looking A7 appears to have had a colourful history.

The story goes that a previous owner had been touring Belgium on the bike, only to have it stolen and used by the thieves as a getaway ride in a bank raid. It was recovered by the police, none the worse for its adventure and after due process, ridden safely home.

As for diplomatic duties, it was once attached to the Australian Embassy in London, possibly in the early 1970s, although for how long is not known. If anyone out there can verify either story, owner Dave Willmer would be very pleased to hear from you. Contact through the magazine as usual, thanks. In the meantime, the bike's clocked up well over 80,000 miles with Dave and Lynne; it's now on 103,000 and still going strong.

Apart from this, the BSA has another surprise; it flies. Not literally, but it's the fastest 500 twin I've ridden. In fact, it'd give many sporting 650s a run for their money and be smoother in the process. It doesn't look up to much, with the touring panniers and topbox, but that's just a Clark Kent disguise, which falls away when you twist the throttle. That's when its true colours are revealed; it might not wear a large letter S and a bright red cape, but ride this one and you'll believe a BSA can fly.

Dave's always been into motorcycles, from a Norton Jubilee when he was 16, through CZ and Yamaha Enduros and eventually to the A7. For his road riding, he went on an intensive three-day course before taking his test about 15 years ago. ➤



"I bought the BSA on my 40th birthday in 1994; falling off the Yamaha was beginning to hurt and I also needed a hobby that both Lynne and I could enjoy. I found it by word of mouth through my motor trade connections; it was complete, but very rough." Lynne laughed... "I thought he was completely nuts, it was a rust bucket!"

That same afternoon, Dave fitted a plastic Suzuki petrol tank, poured Coca Cola down the bores to free the pistons, flushed it out with fresh oil and it fired up on the fourth kick. "I got it into top gear, so at least the gearbox seemed okay. I stripped the whole bike down that weekend in a shed I'd bought for the job and it took me over two years to rebuild the bike from scratch. All the tinware is original, even the tank, which was very badly rusted, I had it repaired rather than replaced."

Starting with a pile of rusty components, Dave degreased everything and then sent all the red painted parts to Kevin Morley at Milford for a respray.

"He really did do a lovely job, I was very pleased," said Dave. The engine's had two rebuilds in over 80,000 miles, aside from the initial check over and clean up. "That was when I bought it, the speedo only had 25,000 miles on the clock, so the engine was in pretty good shape. I did a

ABOVE
BSA is set up for some serious long distance hauling

decoke, cleaned out the sludge trap and replaced some of the electrical connectors and the piston rings."

Dave took the precaution of having the Amal monobloc carburettor resleeved. "That was done by Roy Dagger, a contact of Andy Cook at Brits and Pieces; Roy's since moved to Lincolnshire," added Dave.

The petrol tank was in a sorry state, "I sent it to Richard Hosell in Darleston; he welded in a new bottom, repaired some other damage and had it re-chromed and primed.

"He managed to keep the maker's initials and date stamp at the rear of the tank, which I was pleased with. Kevin Morley finished it off with the maroon top coat," said Dave.

Apart from that, Dave fitted new wheels. "They were Dunlop rims, I got them cheap because they were 18in, not 19in, plus new exhaust pipes and silencers, but I managed to replace the rims with 19in items three years ago."

He ran the A7 for three months and took Lynne on a club trip to France, where a gudgeon pin scored the cylinder bore. "And that was the first time I'd been on a bike for 20 years," said Lynne. It still ran okay, though, well enough to get them home. "Just breathing rather heavily," said Dave.

"To cap it all, Andy Cook's Triumph Saint fell on it while

1958 BSA 500CC A7

ENGINE TYPE: OHV four-stroke **BORE X STROKE:** 66 x 72.6mm **DISPLACEMENT:** 497cc **COMPRESSION RATIO:** 9:1 **CARBURATION:** Amal Monobloc 1in **CLAIMED POWER:** 33bhp (std) **TRANSMISSION:** Wet multi-plate clutch, BSA four-speed gearbox **ELECTRICS:** Dynamo, 12v electronic regulator, magneto ignition **FRAME:** Duplex cradle type **FRONT SUSPENSION:** BSA telescopic forks **REAR SUSPENSION:** Swinging arm, Ikon suspension units **FRONT BRAKE:** 7in sls **REAR BRAKE:** 7in sls **FRONT TYRE:** 3.60 x 19 TT100 **REAR TYRE:** 4.10 x 19 TT100 **FUEL CAPACITY:** 3.5 gallons **WEIGHT:** 416lb



we were on the ferry. The company was very good about it and paid for all the damage repairs."

But the gudgeon pin was down to Dave, "I'd reused the circlips, a lesson learned there!" Andy Cook found some new standard barrels to replace the badly scored originals.

While the top end was being sorted, Dave sent the crankshaft and cases to SRM for the crankshaft oil feed and needle roller conversion. "It was Bob Michell, our club magazine editor who took the parts down there for me." They dynamically balanced the crank and to add a bit of pep, Dave fitted 9:1 'SS' pistons; he collected the engine a month later, on Christmas Eve. The bike ran well for over six years and many thousands of miles, but back in France again, a small end went.

Dave recalled: "It came back on a trailer that time. I took it back to SRM as it was also time for a crankshaft regrind; Andy Cook supplied new old stock shells at minus 30 thou in their original wrapping."

Dave finished rebuilding the A7 on a Friday and ran it in on Saturday – with a return trip from Sussex to Newquay in time for a club run on Sunday. That weekend he covered 817 miles with the only problem being a blown headlamp bulb.

There's several practical modifications on the Star Twin; the electrics use a solid state rectifier and produce a reliable 12v that supply power to a 55/65W QH headlamp and heated gloves. The wiring loom is original, as is the dynamo, but the battery is from a Honda CB900F2 and the magneto is still going strong on a rebuild by Tony Matthews in 1996.

Tyres are Dunlop TT100s and the rear shock absorbers

are Ikon units. Front forks have the double damping conversion kit, which Dave bought from a club member, Doug Scott. The name rang a bell, it turned out Doug had a 1948 A7, one we'd featured in *CBG* some time ago. There's also an anti wet sumping valve, a 21T gearbox sprocket and an iron cylinder head. "I use unleaded petrol with a standard iron head and it's no problem at all," said Dave.

Up on the office shelf are a number of trophies the bike's won at various shows; one of Dave's favourites is the pre-75 'Best In Show' award from 1996. "It was at a Triumph Owners' Club event," he smiled. The most noteworthy aspect of the bike, however, is the mileage it's covered – over 80,000 local and continental miles in all weathers, all year round.

So where have Dave, Lynne and the A7 been? That trophy shelf is laden with rally awards; the Isle of Man Centenary – 1700 miles on that trip – the Classic Ballade

ABOVE
A7 has covered over 8000 miles in all weathers, both here in the UK and abroad

'I found it by word of mouth; it was complete, but very rough. That same afternoon, I fitted a plastic Suzuki petrol tank, poured Coca Cola down the bores to free the pistons, flushed it out with fresh oil and it fired up on the fourth kick'



OWNER DAVE WILLMER

has added a trailer, it's a copy of a Jawa / CZ PAV 41 with some useful modifications. The chassis is twin tube instead of single and Dave's also fitted a telescopic shock absorber in place of the usual rubber bump stop. You'll have spotted the indicators, but underneath the chassis is a Vespa scooter stand, which enables the trailer to be parked upright on its own.

The rack is a CZ accessory and the suitcase is a Second World War item carrying the tea making kit. The trailer takes all their clothes, packed into a pair of Honda Pan European pannier liner bags, plus enough tools to strip and rebuild the A7.

Dave and Lynne first rode the outfit to the 2014 Sword Beach Normandy Anniversary event. They've now clocked up 86,000 miles on the A7, making 109,000 in total.

at Therouldeville, France, The Tour Des Baronnies, at Nyons, Tour De La Drome, Provencal, Tour du Bearn, Pyrenees, plus several club tours in Yorkshire. All done from 1996 onwards and with repeat visits for some of the events.

In short, it's a well travelled A7; off the top of my head it's probably the highest mileage British bike in regular use I've seen to date. Dave's a former chairman of the Mid Sussex British Motorcycle Owners' Club and along with Lynne, won the club's annual award for the highest number of runs attended, for three years in a row. So he kept that award and then won the replacement trophy in 2002, 2004 and 2007. And yes, they presented him with that one for keeps as well.

"The only other rider to come close," said Dave, was the late John Dymock, also riding an A7. He won it in 2001 and 2003. Not all of Dave's club runs were on his BSA, but he still covered the majority of miles on it.

I asked Dave about the Craven luggage kit, where did he find it? "The topbox came from Sammy Miller's. We were on the Honda at the time and ended up strapping the Craven box on top of the Honda's box to get it home. The panniers came from club member Graham York and my sister-in-law, Char Willmer, sprayed the whole lot to match the bike."

And considering the mileage, it's not surprising to learn that the seat's been re-covered three times; RK Leighton supplied the correct covers with the white piping. The bulk of the mileage was travelled between 1996-2004. Dave recalled: "We turned the 100,000 mark as we rode alongside Hadrian's Wall. Lynne stood up on the pillion footrests to watch the speedo and take a photo; because of that we were stopped by a WPC, who asked if we were okay!"

With all those miles covered, Dave thought that the A7 would need a rebuild, so he planned to start on its 50th birthday, but he said: "It was running so well I decided to leave it another 10 years."

The only black mark Dave can put against the bike

concerns the front brake plate, as it's cracked three times. The crack appears where the brake lever spindle enters the hub; it once caused the brake to seize and throw Dave off the bike. He's kept a very close eye on it since.

I mentioned earlier that the bike's a flier and it's no idle boast. It really does go well and maintains a high degree of rider comfort in the process. Starting the A7 was easy, just two swings on the kickstart lever and the engine settled into a smooth idle.

Gearbox action was positive; first gear went in with a neat click and the light clutch took up the drive without complaint. The raised gearing slows initial acceleration a touch, but as the revs rise the engine responds with a surge of power that would surprise riders of larger capacity machines. Part of the route took me on to the A24, a fast trunk road and not the best place to ride a 50-year-old 500cc twin, but Dave suggested I try it and see what happened. I did and enjoyed every minute of it.

The speedo swept past 50, 60 and on to 70mph; this half-litre twin easily kept pace with the traffic and didn't rattle me to pieces in the process. It's the smoothest twin I've ridden, without a doubt. SRM did a fine job and that, together with well set-up ignition and carburettor, means this A7 is able to punch well above its fighting weight. But as we all know, speed's no good without the handling and brakes to back it up, so it's good to say that Dave's kept a sensible balance here.

The uprated front forks and Ikon rear suspension are big improvements over standard; the ride's firm, well damped and inspires confidence at higher speeds. Off the main road, the bike's happy to burble along country lanes, with third gear at 30mph a better bet if you're looking for quick throttle response on the higher gearing.

Brakes were a match for performance at lower speeds, but with the extra horsepower on tap, I'd probably opt for a TLS in the front hub for total peace of mind.

It's a remarkable motorcycle. What stands out is the combination of performance and smoothness; I've a new yardstick to judge others by and it'll be a tough one to beat. **CBG**

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XS APPEAL

Curves in all the right places

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY PHIL MATHER. ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFO BY GP

It's the early 1970s and the long-standing era of the three-cornered fight for the annual AMA Grand National Championship is drawing to a close. Harley-Davidson has introduced its overhead valve XR750 which is already showing its potential, although there is much development work still to be done before it establishes unassailable dominance of the dirt tracks. BSA, as a company, is dying on its feet.

The success of the Gold Star years has never been repeated by the A65-based twins that followed. Dick Mann takes the title in 1971 using A65-based twins on the dirt, his flat track effort is bolstered by success in road races with the Rob North-framed Rocket III.

And even Triumph's star is waning. Gene Romero wins the 1970 National title but, as the decade gathers pace, its highly-tuned 750 motor is finally proving to be the end of the line for the classic Meriden parallel twin.

So what happened next? History will show that the Bar and Shield (Harley-Davidson) did eventually get to the top and fight off all-comers in a most awe-inspiring way, but not before an unexpected intrusion from a young rookie aboard a bike from the Land of the Rising Sun.

Up until 1969 Yamaha had been a successful manufacturer of two-stroke motorcycles, but that year it launched a direct bid for the sector of the American market that had, up until then, been the preserve of the British industry – the 650cc parallel twin four-stroke. Admittedly, Yamaha's initial XS-1 suffered from mediocre drum brakes, soft suspension and a flexi chassis, but at its heart was a bulletproof overhead cam motor, and it was this that the dirt track riders set upon with glee.

Chuck Palmgren, a protégé of Triumph factory rider Gary Nixon in 1969 on Meriden twins, switched to Yamaha in 1970 and gave the Japanese company its first National dirt

OPPOSITE
Guy Gurton with his rather neat Yamaha XS650 street tracker

track victory at Nazareth – a one mile oval track. The writing was on the wall for the British bikes.

Palmgren went on to more success with the Yamaha twins, backed by All American Racers owner Dan Gurney (yes, the guy who won the 1967 Belgian GP in his own self-built Eagle Weslake car – still the only American to have built and won in his own GP car – built over 100 Indy cars, and ran Toyota's sports car programme).

But as Palmgren was at the peak of his career, a Modesto, California kid called Kenny Roberts was developing his prowess as a motorcycle racer. His natural riding talent quickly earned him sponsorship, first from his local Suzuki dealer and then from Yamaha America which gave him a factory ride at the tender age of 19. The following year, 1971, Kenny won the AMA Rookie of the Year Award and the year after that, under the watchful eye of Australian 250cc world champion Kel Carruthers, he went head-to-head with Harley-Davidson. His dirt track bike? An XS650 parallel twin.

As with all dirt track bikes, the riders, even those with factory backing, built and maintained the machines themselves, or had a mechanic to do so. You couldn't pop down to your local bike shop and pick up a ready-made machine like you could a trials iron or motocrosser. The exception to this was Harley-Davidson which listed the XR750 in its catalogue – but even then it took experienced tuners to get the best out of the motors.

In Kenny's case on the Yamaha, Sheldon 'Shell' Thuet was the guy wielding the spanners. Shell had worked on motorcycles almost all his life; ran an Indian dealership after the Second World War, sold and raced Royal Enfields, and eventually took on a Yamaha dealership.

During the 1960s he established an enviable reputation for building and tuning competition machines, so it was ➤



OPPOSITE

Now Guy lives in the country the XS650 street tracker comes into its own – being so light and nimble – as well as noisy

little surprise that Yamaha contracted him to work his magic on Kenny's bikes.

In 1972, Kenny ended the racing season fourth in the National Championship, a result gained through riding skill and sheer determination. In 1973 and 74 his personal qualities as a rider combined with the tuning wizardry of Shell Thuet, now working on an overbored 750cc engine, netted him the number one plate by a wide margin. But that was the last time that a Yamaha rider beat Harley-Davidson to the top slot.

After two years in the limelight, the Yamaha motor had no more to give despite the factory reworking the cylinder head to better match the larger capacity engines. In contrast, the Harleys – with their 45° V-twin power pulses perfectly suited to the unique demands of dirt track racing – still had a long way to go in development and, with all the specialist tuners competing head-to-head, the Harleys got faster and faster.

But that wasn't the end of the XS650 by a long shot. Development had raised output from an initial 42hp at the rear wheel to 70hp, with no detriment to reliability, so the Yamaha remained competitive if no longer a sure-fire winner. Yamaha hired Tim Witham (a former tuner for Harley rider Joe Leonard and who also ran a suspension company called S&W Engineered Products). He hiked the power a further five horsepower but the bike had reliability issues – which Witham insisted were just 'teething problems'.

The biggest issue holding back the Yamaha was its restrictive cylinder head porting and in 1976, at Witham's suggestion, Yamaha supplied blank, unmachined heads, allowing the tuner to work his magic. To keep within the rules, 24 engines with the new heads had to be built in a project known as OW72. With a potential output of 90bhp it put the Yamahas back in contention with the Harley – but only in certain track conditions. Roberts won just one half mile race that year and would finish third in the points in a year defined by a new Harley hero, 19-year-old Jay Springsteen. The Yamaha twin was done. But was it?

Such was the popularity of the motor that tuning shops would come up with stronger, more durable components. Yamaha even published an engine modification guide (which is still available at 650performance.com) to keep the XS650 in the running.

'Back then, I didn't know much about flat trackers or street trackers, but when Bob pulled the cover off his Yamaha I knew in an instant how badly I wanted that bike'

Production of the road bikes continued up until 1985 ensuring there were thousands of machines to be converted for track use, utilising the vast pool of aftermarket parts that had resulted from Kenny Roberts' high profile success. This was to prove a boon when the revival of classic and vintage flat track racing began. And, as always, there were those folk who wanted, and still want, a bike with flat track good looks, even though they never intend to strap on a steel shoe and experience the adrenaline rush that comes with gassing it down the straight and turning left. That, I guess, is where the street tracker comes in.

Guy Gurton, the current owner of our feature bike, freely admits he fell for its charms when he first saw it in a friend's garage. "I'm into classic Italian cars really, both as a hobby and a business. But I've always had a bike so I'm into Italian bikes too, especially the little two-strokes which I rode as a teenager. This doesn't explain why I bought the Yamaha, or maybe it does in a round-about sort of way. It's so different, unique and so right in every way. It sounds fantastic through those megaphones and the colour really knocks you out."

Guy's mate, Neil McGovern, was similarly entranced. Ten years ago he and a buddy were running a business in Sheffield specialising in off-road machines, but they were losing a lot of custom due to a dearth of good second-hand bikes. However, little more than an eight-hour flight away across the Atlantic were dozens of dirt bikes which, with the dollar low against the pound, were going for giveaway prices.

"Next thing I know, we're on a plane to Chicago, then driving inland for about an hour into dirt bike and quad bike country to a town called Walnut, Illinois. Here we hoped to find a shop selling just what we were after. Sure enough they had more Honda and Suzuki trail bikes and crossers than we could handle, so much so that we went back the following year to buy more," said Neil.

While the bikes were being loaded into a container, Neil got talking to a guy behind the spares counter who told him that his dad had a dirt track at home and he was welcome to try it out. You can build quite a big track out in the middle of nowhere, as Neil found out, but the old man, Bob Pistole, was far more than a construction engineer.

"Bob was in the process of restoring a Ford Falcon but he was really into his bikes and had two immaculate Maico scramblers in the workshop which he'd rebuilt. And, he told me, he had plans to construct a dirt track oval so he could ride the Yamaha he had built. Back then, I didn't know much about flat trackers or street trackers, but when Bob pulled the cover off his Yamaha I knew in an instant how badly I wanted that bike," Neil added.

Bob Pistole built his Yamaha custom from 'parts he had laying around' – basically a 1975 650 XS-B. "Right from the off the 650 had that lean dirt track look about it and given the model's racing history it seemed right to stick to that style. Besides, I could keep it street legal without detracting from that look," said Bob.

He stripped and rebuilt the engine without need for anything other than a top-end gasket set. Likewise the ➤





ABOVE
Omar's Dirt Track Racing seat/numberplate bodywork hides the battery and stock electrics and emphasises the flat track look

rolling chassis came apart, gained new head races and swingarm bushes and lost the upper frame rails rearwards of the shock absorber mounts. The pillion footrest brackets came off too, all except a short length of tube to mount the rear brake light switch.

"You have to think ahead somewhat. With a race bike there's nothing to come off. Maybe if you're altering the pegs or fitting a different brake you have to put on an extra mount and sometimes a part needs beefing up because it isn't strong enough. With a road bike the urge is to get in there with the grinder and lose the junk, but there's no point cutting something off today and welding it back on tomorrow. Like I cut off the left-hand centrestand fixing, but the right-hand one mounts the exhaust. There's a kinda satisfaction figuring all this out," Bob explained.

A one-piece seat/number board unit originally from Omar's Dirt Track Racing in Concord, California, hides the battery and stock electrics. The seat cushion is held in place with Velcro and lifts off for access.

"I had the seat redone – well, I had to have the seat redone with thicker padding because you couldn't go any distance without it being painful. I guess you're concentrating on other things when you're riding competition!" said Bob.

The exhaust pipe configuration is what they call a 'half mile system' with marginally baffled reverse cone megas clamped to 1½in diameter Sanderson headers. "They say loud pipes save lives," quips Bob. "Well whoever owns that bike should live forever!"

As to the origin of the fuel tank Bob is uncertain. "I'm sure it came with the bike – it fits right on the stock mounts but the petcock is really tight on the left-hand carb. It looks pretty though."

Something else that looks good are the front fork sliders. A Ceriani front end would have been a natural choice for a dirt bike but Bob chose to do a little judicious lathe work to alter the appearance of the stock sliders which meant the Yamaha front wheel and brake caliper fitted without any

modification. The wheels, too, are stock Yamaha with flanged alloy rims, with a 110/90 x 19 tyre on the front and a 120/80 x 18 on the rear.

Detail touches, the things that can make or break a bike, are down to what Bob had laying around and what he could source in his local bike shop. The front brake master cylinder with its mini reservoir and dogleg lever and the rear shocks might, Bob thinks, have come off a Honda dirt bike. The front fork brace from K&W Cycles in Michigan is both practical and substantial enough to double as a mudguard for the purposes of the UK MoT test. Throw in some wide handlebars, genuine dirt track bends, matching mini speedo and taco, and a braided front brake hose and you have yourself one tidy package.

So why did you sell the Yamaha Bob?

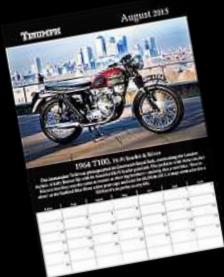
"I didn't, not right away. The first time the guy from England saw it I figured I'd spent maybe three years piecing it together and I wanted to get some time in riding it. The following year he was back but I still said 'No'. Then I got around to thinking I had more pleasure outa building it than I ever would riding it, so I gave him a call and rightaway he said to put it in with the next shipment of bikes he was buying for his shop. S'long as somebody is happy riding it I guess my job is done."

And why did Neil sell it to Guy? "Oh the usual reason, I was buying a house and I needed the cash. I had a few time wasters and day dreamers but I'd been in the business long enough to stick out for a fair price. I'm glad it went to Guy because I know he appreciates what he's got and will take care of it."

A last word from Guy then? "A bike like this attracts a lot of attention, but I moved out into the country last year and there are a few roads around where I can wind up the motor without people falling on to the pavement clutching their ears in agony! It's not a bike for touring, but for an afternoon blat down to the coast it's ideal. Maybe I'll even persuade one of the local farmers to scrape out an oval track in one of his fields." **CBG**



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TRIUMPH TSX

THE LAST HURRAH

Low rider looks aimed at the US market just weren't enough to save Meriden, the last bastion of the British motorcycle industry

WORDS BY MICHAEL BARRACLOUGH PHOTOS BY TIM KEETON

Triumph was a company in peril as it staggered bravely into the 1980s – despite being well established as one of the world's foremost motorcycle manufacturers. It was the last man standing. By this time the vast majority of classic British motorcycling names were no more, having tried and failed to stem the tidal wave of exciting new Japanese bikes that were flooding markets across the world.

Regardless of the growing adversity, Triumph showed incredible resilience simply to stay afloat as bikes such as Honda's seminal CB750 gradually rendered machines like the Bonneville increasingly obsolete. However it was the Bonneville, in various different guises, that boldly carried Triumph forward into the 1980s and thus became the motorcycle that it relied upon to keep the company solvent in this new, uncertain decade.

During the first few months of 1980, the chief engineer at Triumph's Meriden works, Brian Jones, was toying with the idea of producing a slightly Americanised Bonneville variant. The story goes that he had been inspired by the success of Monaco Cycle Sales in Franklin, Pennsylvania. Proprietor John Monaco would modify Triumph machines to exact customer specifications, and managed to run a very successful business thanks largely to his tailored Triumphs.

The notion was, that this new Triumph would be a recognisable relation of the T140 Bonneville, but it would be stylised in such a way that it would appeal to young American riders. Triumph believed that a possible market existed in these lively American youths who wanted something other than one of the Japanese machines that were popping up all over the country. The mentality behind this new bike was not to create a super high-performance road monster, but rather to build something that handled well and, more importantly, looked cool.

Meriden had made a vague stab at this market in 1979 with its Bonneville D Special, but that machine fizzled out without generating much hype. It was hoped that this time it would be different, and for Triumph's sake it really needed to be.

The style that was popular at the time was the 'low-rider' look which naturally entailed a slightly lowered riding position and repositioned footpegs, along with short silencers, high handlebars and a chunky rear tyre. Brian Jones was not keen to move any further than those fairly minor amendments – the T140 Bonnie was a template to be adhered to as closely as was humanly possible.

The reason why the proposed changes to the bike weren't overly drastic is twofold. Firstly the Bonneville had been wildly popular in America in years gone by and it was hoped that, with a few modern appointments, the ➤

'The notion was, that this new Triumph would be a recognisable relation of the T140 Bonneville, but it would be stylised in such a way that it would appeal to young American riders'









American riders might rediscover their fondness for the Bonnie and purchase one, either out of nostalgia or as an attempt to stand out from the waves of Hondas, Suzukis and Kawasakis that were becoming ever more popular stateside. The second (and vastly more significant) reason is that Triumph was not as affluent as it had been in previous years and couldn't afford to start splashing its funds around attempting to build a full-blown Triumph chopper from scratch.

Of all the names associated with the TSX project, Wayne Moulton, head of TMA (Triumph Motorcycles America), is widely regarded as the most important figure in getting the idea off the boardroom table and on to the factory floor. Moulton was already well acquainted with the intended demographic and he himself had some success when he conceived and developed the LTD range of machines when he was working for Kawasaki. These custom variations of existing Kawasakis proved to be very popular, and Moulton adopted a similar approach with the Triumph TSX.

Brian Jones was happy with Moulton's prototype and soon the Triumph TSX went into production, with the factory turning out bike after bike pretty much exactly as Moulton specified. The TSX had the engine of the T140ES electric-start Bonnie – a 744cc power unit with a four-valve head and cast-iron barrel – with some of the earlier T140 TSS model's stronger bottom end. The cylinder head and rocker boxes were black with their fin edges highlighted in bare metal, which made it identical to the earlier T140LE Royal in that regard. The 16in rear wheel was kitted out with a beefy Avon Roadrunner tyre with the regular 19in Avon Roadrunner at the front.

The silencers were short, looked good and produced quite an addictive exhaust note, but they did not do much to help articulate the power of the engine, which may have been able to churn out more than the 49bhp that it was officially capable of producing. Triumph interestingly

included 32mm Bing carburetors as opposed to Amal carbs. There were even a few Italian components thrown into the mix; the rear shock absorbers were built by Paoli, and the rear brake courtesy of Italian company Brembo.

The low-rider style brought about one minor snag in terms of design; the small diameter rear wheel meant that the engine had to be shifted slightly in the frame and the swinging arm completely reimagined in order to achieve a sensible chain line. The stepped King and Queen seat, one of Brian Jones' original suggestions, sits well in the ensemble, but the machine did endure quite a few criticisms almost as soon as it appeared on the consumer market in 1982.

The burgundy petrol tank with the red, orange and yellow stripe pattern generated mixed opinions. The TSX was also available in a more understated midnight black paint job, but for whatever reason far more burgundy-painted models were produced – some estimate that as many as two-thirds of all the TSX machines ever built were in the interesting burgundy-and-stripes colour scheme.

The concept of the machine itself was also questioned. Triumph was keen to publicise the fact that its British-American motorcycle was a completely different machine to ➤

ABOVE
Meriden rested its hopes on the American styling and uprated engine of the TSX

'The silencers were short, looked good and produced quite an addictive exhaust note, but they did not do much to help articulate the power of the engine'



ABOVE

Robin James Engineering completed the restoration of the Triumph but it proved a difficult task even for them with parts so difficult to come by for what has become a rare machine

all the Japanese bikes, and the advertisements proudly declared "A Yamakawahonzuki it ain't". It certainly wasn't a Japanese bike, right enough, but it looked a bit like one. This brought the aesthetic aspect of TMA's design philosophy into question.

In 1983 the TSX was still going, though 'going strong' might be a step too far. There were no mechanical changes to the motorcycle, but it did undergo a change of name. It had changed its moniker to TSX4 – the new designation signifying the four-valve cylinder head. This was because the folks at Meriden and at TMA were thinking of putting the eight-valve T140 TSS engine in the TSX and marketing it as the TSX8. Unfortunately for Triumph, money was running out, and though the TSX was a valiant attempt at pulling some revenue in, their fate was ultimately sealed.

'The lack of money had naturally led to Triumph having to market its products at a high price, which led to sales drying up. Production ceased alongside the closure of the Meriden works during August 1983.'

The TSX8 never made it on to the production line and Triumph juddered to a halt.

Some people have said that TSX pioneer Wayne Moulton had designed the bike specifically with the eight-valve head in mind, though what this eight-valve TSX would have performed like, we will never know. The lack of money had naturally led to Triumph having to market its products at a high price, which led to sales drying up almost instantaneously. A typical price for a TSX was about \$3695 – it certainly wasn't cheap. Production ceased alongside the closure of the Meriden works during August 1983.

History aside, this example here is one of the surprisingly few TSX models that Triumph actually manufactured. Some sources say that only 381 machines were built, others believe that the number was as low as 361. Either way, this marks the TSX as a staggeringly rare machine that belies its comparatively modern production date. This particular model left the factory on June 10, 1982, which means that it may well have been one of the very first machines to land on the market.

The bike was restored by Robin James Engineering Services, and it presented a challenge even for him as parts were scarce and contemporary examples were scarcer. Also the steel bolts in the cylinder head were completely immobile. In the end they needed to be machined off as no amount of leverage could budge them. Regardless of the difficulties inherent in restoring such a unique bike, the restoration did not take much longer to complete than any other job, and was finished on July 4, 2014. 

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MOT MORINI Kanguro X1, 350, low miles, very good original condition, easy starter, runs well, recent tyres, chain, battery, Hagon shock, long MoT, £1450 Tel. 01162 776366 eves; 07754 086552 Leics



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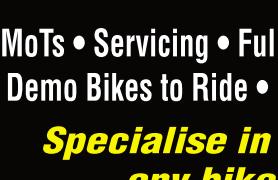
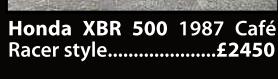
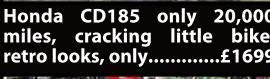
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TRIUMPH Speed triple 955i, 03 reg, MoT May 2015, 68,000 miles, recent chain sprockets & tyres, Motrax chain oiler, well maintained, £2300 ono Tel. 07713 789235 South Yorkshire



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TRIUMPH 5T 1957, pre-unit, unused sine 1973, matching numbers, original reg no, restored mid 90s, many new parts, £3200 Tel. 01633 484038 Gwent



TRIUMPH 900 Adventurer, 1997, 16,500 miles, mint condition, many extras inc centre stand, lots of chrome, MoT, consider swap plus cash for carb Hinckley Bonnie, £2995 Tel. 01723 378230 North Yorks



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TRIUMPH T120 1967, UK bike, MoT, matching nos, fantastic bike ride or investment, £7250 Tel. 01706 852775 Lancs



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DUCATI MONZA Sport Mark 3, 1970 on good condition, don't mind minor work, 250, 350, 450 sensible price, cash waiting. Tel. 01932 786030. Middlesex.

HONDA CG125 good engine wanted, low miles, one that suits 1989 bike maybe complete bike. Tel. 02082 203383.

HONDA TLR 200/250 Trials wanted, any condition will travel to view. Tel. 07583 716066. Lincs.

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TRIUMPH T20B Super Cub, 1967/8 with original square engine, barrel head matching numbers, good condition, minor work ok, sensible price. Tel. Dave 01932 786030. Middx.

VELOCETTE MAC wanted, prefer fully sorted bike but ok with one that requires minor attention. Tel. Bob 0114 2467958; 07902 004927. South Yorkshire.

WANTED CLASSIC BIKE or project Cafe Racer or Special, anything considered even non runner or incomplete will collect anywhere and pay cash on collection. Tel. 07931 557018; 01613 350497 after 6pm. Lancs.

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WANTED FOR COMMANDO MK3, E/S starter motor plus speedo clock. Sale BSA A65 s/h pistons std, £20 pair. Tel. 01772 783774. Lancs.

WANTED MOTORCYCLE LIFT and a box of bits to fit a Super Cub. Tel. 01526 354842. Lincs.

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WANTED VINCENT literature anything any language & bike mags, badges etc, swap MV books, literature, USA books, mags, etc, trucks, cars, wildwest, wildlife, planes, WW1&2. Tel. 01277 200530. Essex.

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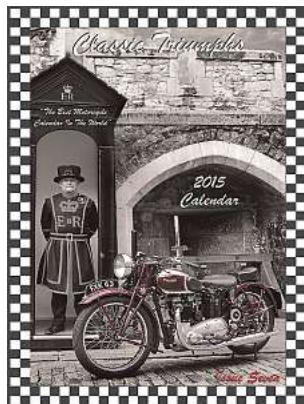
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RESTORATIONS often share a common showstopper: wiring issues. Within reason any numpty should be able to swap out a brake light switch, renew a horn lead or install a new fuse holder, but it's when consecutive numpties have all had their input that things sometimes go disastrously wrong.

Compound bodge, miles of insulating tape, screw block connectors and even domestic mains cable hastily pressed into service are all facets of a problem waiting to happen. At best you'll probably end up doing a roadside repair but at worst you could be facing a full-on bike fire. Don't scoff; it's happened to many an unsuspecting owner. Speaking as someone who once stood by helplessly watching as his MZ Supa Five went up in sheets of flame, it's a damn miserable feeling.

Motorcycle wiring is normally fairly robust, but age, consistent wear and well intentioned owners can and will take their toll. If you think about the working conditions of a motorcycle wiring loom it doesn't have the easiest of lives. Extremes of temperature, water exposure, vibration and flexing must all collectively have an impact. Think about the loom as it passes from the headlight to the headstock and



under the tank; just how many times has that bunch of cables been flexed left to right on full lock? If the same was happening to the wiring in your house you'd have kittens!

If you have the knowledge and skills, rewiring a bike can be straightforward but, as the saying goes, a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. Expert input with a guarantee on the end job isn't costly, it's priceless. Knowing your motorcycle is wired not as per book but better and safer is an incredibly reassuring feeling. Modern, low resistance thin wall cable, soldered joints to key areas, solid state current control, multiple earths and a host of other subtle tweaks will ensure your bike performs better than its manufacturer ever thought possible. If you grasp the fact that our beloved classics were simply made as profit generating consumer items then you will know that compromises were made during their design and build.

In this feature we're going to be looking at a total and complete rewire of a typical, easily affordable classic. Most half competent DIY home mechanics would and could have had a crack at it but we reckoned it would make sense to get an expert in given the amount of work that's gone into the bike so far. What followed was a master class in logic, common sense and electrical theory.

A Francis-Barnett Cruiser that's been in the same family from new. It's been crashed, thrashed, trashed and misused then finally restored. Being pretty much the last of its breed, it's also something of mongrel assembled with whatever came readily to hand as AMC went into ever decreasing circles. With low rent connectors and questionable practices employed back in 1965 we called in the legendary Ferret to rewire the bike.

THE BIKE'S HISTORY AND TWO GOOD EGGS

The Francis-Barnett in camera belongs to Suzie, partner of Andy Jones who runs a small motorcycle refurbishment business in rural Bedfordshire. The bike was passed to her by her grandfather and so has been in the same family since the day it was purchased.

It's been crashed, thrashed, trashed and misused then left to moulder before finally being restored. Being pretty much the last of its breed it's also something of mongrel assembled with whatever came readily to hand as AMC went into ever decreasing circles. With low rent connectors and questionable practices employed back in 1965 the wiring almost defied logic. As Andy Jones says: "I could have made a reasonable fist of sorting out the wiring but when Ferret offered to come on board how could I refuse?"

Knowing Andy's pragmatic approach to rejuvenating old bikes, CBG knew that everything else would be fine and dandy, so tagging along to watch Ferret in full flight seemed like a good idea to us. Well it seemed rude not to witness the rebirth of the old FB. We can now say without any doubt if you need a bike's electrics sorted call Ferret; if you want a bike sympathetically resurrected call Andy Jones. Both of them are smashing chaps.

Below: Ferret's not happy with the main loom, and with good reason. Insulating tape, bodged connectors, frayed clothing insulation and evidence of vermin attack mean it's only fit for the bin.

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

Ferret makes the whole job look stunningly easy, but then again if you'd been wiring bikes for as long as him so would you. There are various skills he uses, but many of us would benefit from a few key notes from the Messiah of Wire, so here are a few pointers.

No bike runs properly without a good earth and most OEM looms have too few. Always earth extremities and don't rely on the current finding its own way back.

Use top quality wire and components; cheap stuff is rarely a bargain. If you intent to ride the bike upgrade to solid state control systems.

Modern gel batteries are more robust and tend to have a longer service life. Motobatt units in particular are extremely versatile.

Most OEM looms can be improved upon; remember they were made for convenience of manufacture and down to a price. Fitting sub looms often makes the job easier and more logical.

Never assume a component is in good order. Test it and replace if in any doubt; the multi-meter is your best friend.

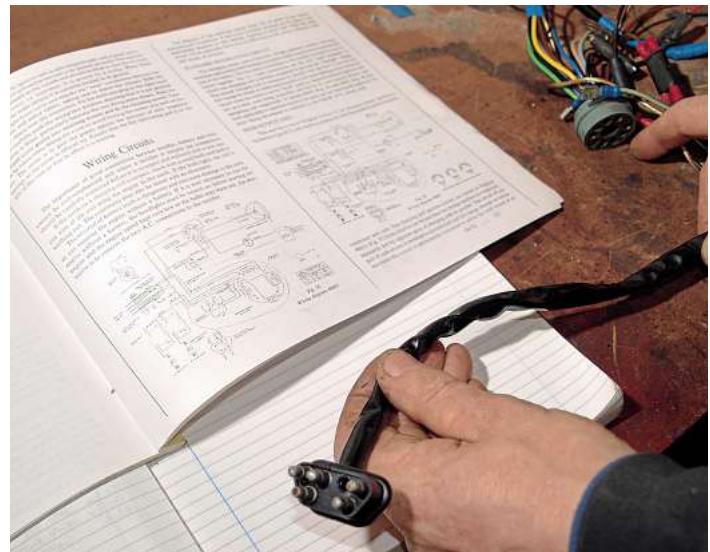
If you don't understand basic electrics read up on the subject; it makes the job so much easier. Always study workshop/wiring diagrams, make copious notes and/or take pictures. Always try to understand how switches work.

"If you have the knowledge and skills, rewiring a bike can be straightforward, but expert input with a guarantee on the end job isn't costly, it's priceless. "





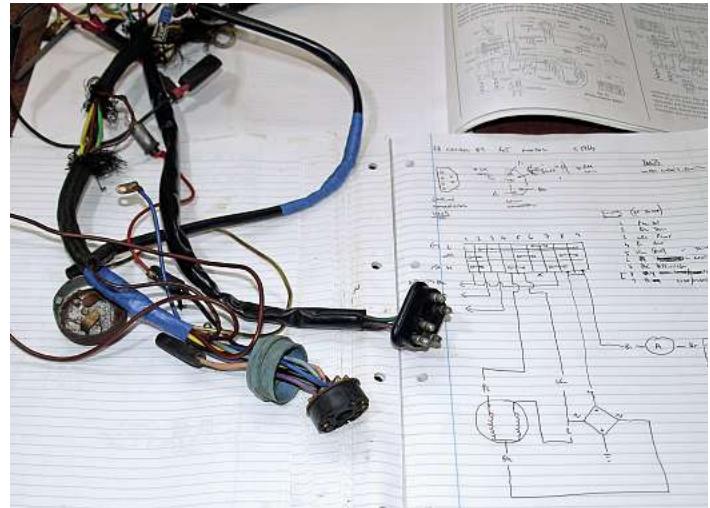
AMC/Villiers lightweight special plug and socket system which may or may not be reusable. Aftermarket copies may be available but are they any good? We need to check out options before making any decisions. A cheap copy may be more hassle than the original.



Assume nothing; just because it looks right doesn't necessarily mean that it is. Ferret and owner Andy between them have come up with three or four different factory wiring layouts. Component suppliers vary; Wipac or Lucas for Brit iron, Hitachi or Mitsubishi for Jap stuff etc.



The main switch can be a source of pure evil. It needs to be checked for resistance, corrosion, damage, loose terminals and burn-out. Some can be reused, others modified to accept modern terminals if a replacement is unavailable. Again be wary of cheap pattern copies.



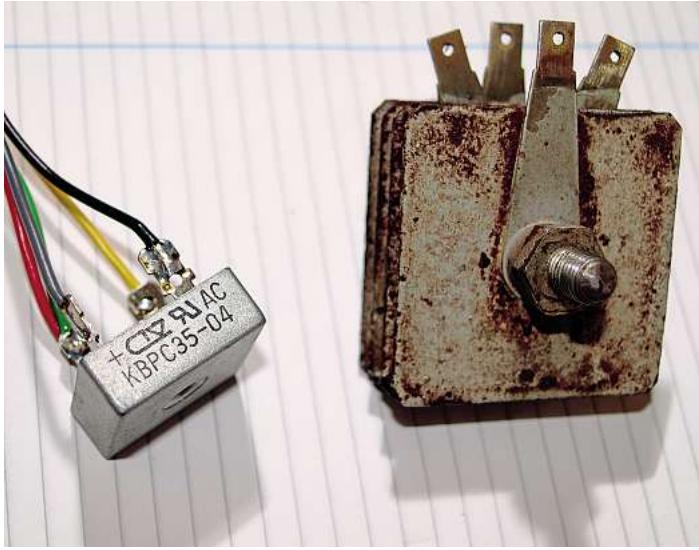
You don't get to be top of your game by making assumptions or rushing into the job. Ferret makes copious notes of how the bike is currently wired up and compares them to the official drawings. The subsequent disassembly and rewire only begins when everything is clear and understood.



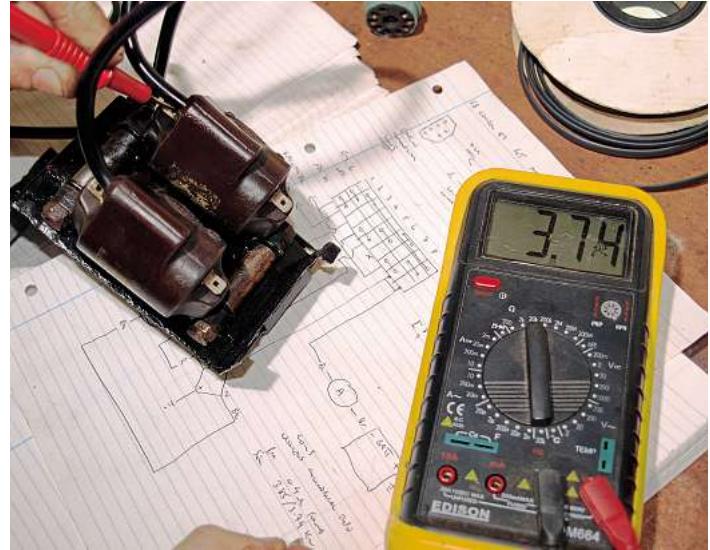
Modern wiring is inestimably better quality than OEM stuff. Thinner, stronger insulation, that's UV resistant and less prone to hardening is the logical choice. Search hard enough and most of the colours you need will be available. Don't buy the cheapest; buy the best you can find.



The original switch unit is toast... literally. Crazed and overheated, distorted and oxidised it's really beyond salvage; fortunately we have a quality replacement. Note a Ferret trademark; the new switch is on its own, new, sub loom to facilitate installation and later servicing.



Again an upgrade recommended by the Messiah of Wire. Selenium rectifiers decay with age and can be fragile. A modern solid state silicon replacement is cheaper and more robust; only an obsessive anorak could possibly object. Soldered connections for this key component are another sensible option.



Strangely the coil pack sits inside the frame and beneath the battery. Before he even thinks of installing it, Ferret checks out the resistances of the primary and secondary windings. Replacement now will be much easier than after everything is installed and bolted in place.



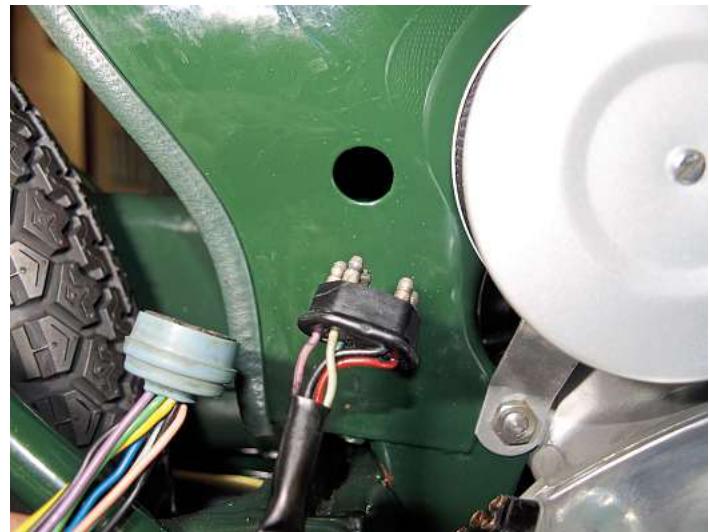
The wires to the ammeter need to be capable of taking the correct current. In this case we're looking at something in the region of 25 amps but check out the alternator's specifications. There's scant room inside the headlamp bowl so the ring terminals must be insulated to prevent a burn-out.



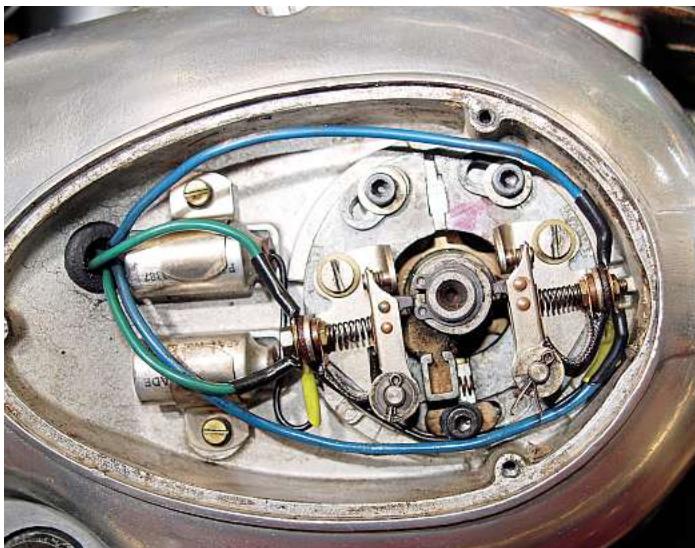
Just in case we've forgotten just why we're doing this, Ferret uncovers just cause. The outer woven covering has fallen apart, leaving the individual wires open to wear. Further along there's some sticky cloth tape that's been used to bodge the loom.



Use the correct colours on switchgear. We could have used purple instead of violet but it might cause confusion later on. Unless it's totally and utterly unavoidable, using the conventional marque/model/make colours is always the best working practice and can make later fault finding so much easier.



The perversity of AMC lightweights! Back in the factory one of these two had to be fitted after the loom had been laid inside the chassis. Ferret will be using a more pragmatic approach that will allow easier installation and/or removal should we need to.



■ Sometimes existing wiring may be perfectly fine and reusable. Ferret has checked the low tension side of the Francis-Barnett out and given it the green light. It's only okay to use if it's free from cuts, corrosion and offers minimal resistance; if in any doubt replace as a matter of course.



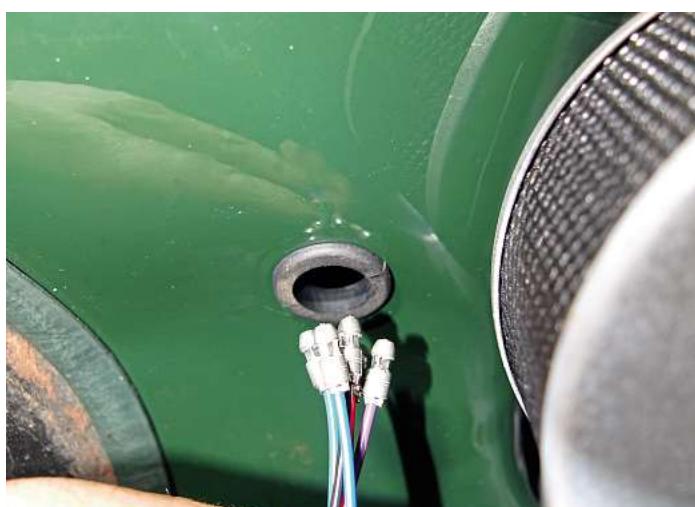
■ If the bike is going to be ridden in anything other than perfect conditions it pays not to skimp with the lighting. This 25W halogen bulb from Paul Goff may cost a tenner or so but it'll actually illuminate your path home at night. It's details such as this that make all the difference during a rewire.



■ The checked and approved coil pack's fitted with the correct nifty right angled components. This minimises the space required for installation. Ferret sets the unit up on its own sub loom for ease of use and later servicing. Five minutes' extra work here may save hours later on.



■ Again Ferret is on his sub loom hobby horse. The new silicon rectifier is bolted into place with its own four wire sub-harness soldered into place ready to be connected up to corresponding insulated females. Should there be a component failure the offending item can be easily removed.



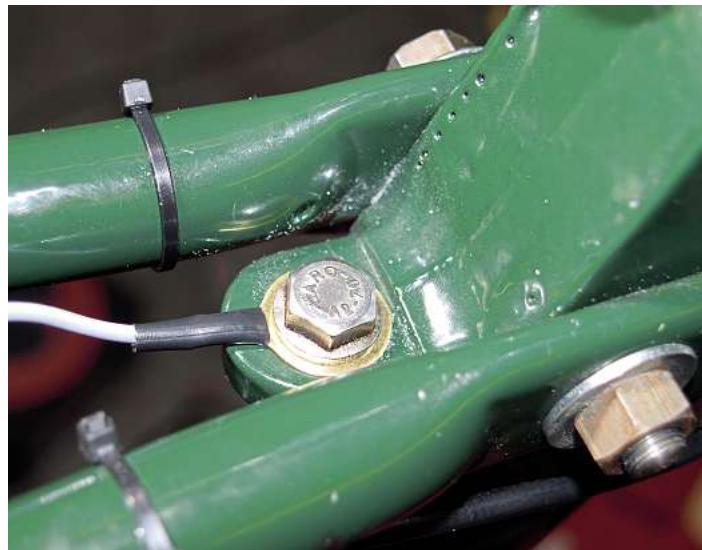
■ Remember that perverse connector? Ferret has again broken down the loom so that we don't have to fit plugs or sockets in situ, thus making the loom captive in the frame. Lateral thought allows us to use plug in sub-sections thereby making later work more straightforward.



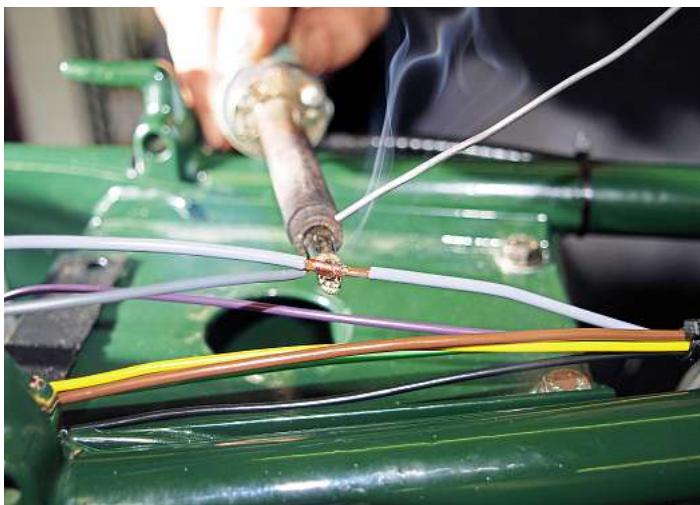
■ Most if not all tail-lamps come with just two wires; one for the rear light and the second for the brake light. Rather than rely on an earth that has to find its way via paint, corrosion or grease, the unit gets its own dedicated earth wire back to the loom. Six volt bulbs need all the help they can get!



■ Modern inline spade fuse holder, sleeved positive/negative leads for neatness, battery isolating junction block... this is light years ahead of what was originally fitted. Upgrading to modern industry practices lifts classics out of the dark ages and makes them much more relevant and usable.



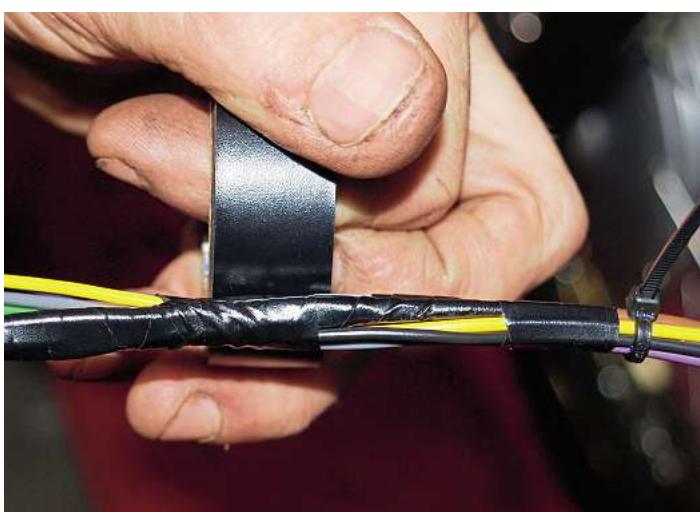
■ Ignore this one item and you might as well not have bothered. Earths are critical to getting the best out of any electrical system. The paint beneath the ring terminal has been removed with a rotary burr ensuring direct metal-to-metal contact. This one action can transform your old motorcycle.



■ If you need to splice in a second wire to a cable, neatly and gently remove the outer sheathing, wrap the splice around the main wire then solder to ensure a permanent joint. Never rely on a wrap-and-tape joint alone and ensure the splice is properly insulated after soldering.



■ Proprietor Andy Jones seems stunned and bewildered witnessing the FB run for the first time in 30+ years. Ferret tweaks the throttle and allows himself a congratulatory smile for a job well done. We just need to get the tank and seat back and we have ourselves a runner.



■ The end's in sight... we've checked it all through and yes the lights do work. Logical sets of wire are bunched together and temporarily held with cable ties. Small wraps of tape hold the loom together while Ferret wraps everything up safe then snips off the ties.

Our thanks to

Ferret for his help, wisdom and endless humour
Andy Jones for access to Suzie's Francis-Barnett

Key players

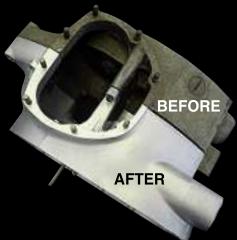
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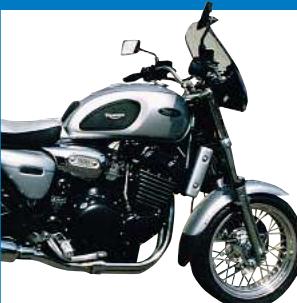
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VJMC (Vintage Japanese

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www.vjmc.com

VMCC: www.vmcc.net

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1962 Model 18

CLASSIC BIKE GUIDE

Buyer's guide

British 500 Singles and Twins

Part 1

The single cylinder motorcycle, in particular the 500cc single, was for many years the backbone of the industry, but in the 1950s the twin cylinder arrived to challenge that position and to better satisfy the changing demands of a new and vibrant buying public.

WORDS BY PHIL MATHER PHOTOS: MORTONS ARCHIVE

1950 Model 18



Matchless and AJS singles

The 500cc single cylinder machines built by Associated Motor Cycles (AMC) can be traced back to the 350cc Matchless G3L which was produced for the military during the Second World War. This model featured a major advance for the time, 'Teledraulic' telescopic front forks, and not long after civilian production restarted, the company brought out its own swinging arm rear suspension.

Incremental improvements culminated

in a new rolling chassis in 1960 and a major engine redesign in 1964.

MODEL DATES

1949-1961 AJS Model 18(S) and Matchless G80(S)
1962-1966 AJS Model 18 Statesman and Matchless G80 Major

ORIGINAL SPECIFICATION

Bore x stroke: 82.3 x 95mm
Compression ratio: 5.9:1
Carburettor: Amal Type 89
Ignition: Lucas Type N1-4 magneto
Electrics: Lucas E3 dynamo
Gearbox: Burman CP

Frame: Single front downtube with swinging arm

Front forks: AMC Teledraulic

Brakes: Single-sided 6½in drums front and rear

Wheels: 19in front and rear

Petrol tank capacity: 3 gallons

Oil tank capacity: 4 pints

Weight: 379lb

MODEL NOTES

Although the two 500s (AJS Model 18 and Matchless G80) were virtually identical, initially they could be distinguished by the positioning of the magneto – on the front of the crankcase on AJS and at the back on Matchless. However, magneto location

was standardised in 1952, and from then on 500 production was a simple case of 'badge engineering' by AMC.

Special taper-roller wheel bearings were used – the inner races and roller cages were integral with the spindle, only the outer races were fitted in the hub.

The original post-Second World War machines featured a rigid frame which remained in production until 1955.

Competition machines based on the standard road models were identified by the suffix 'C' in the model designation.

MODEL DEVELOPMENT

1948: Front and rear brake diameter increased to 7in.

1949: The first models with swinging arm rear suspension introduced, identified by the suffix 'S'. Springing was provided by AMCs own slim 'candlestick' suspension units. Small toolboxes fitted on left- and right-hand sides to the rear of the oil tank and battery respectively. Steering damper available as an option. Single saddle fitted, with pillion pad as an optional extra. Revised cylinder head design with



500cc G80S



1956 Model 18S

hairpin valve springs and new rocker box incorporating the exhaust valve lifter.

1950: Deeper section mudguards with a detachable section on the rear mudguard to facilitate wheel removal.

New silencer with offset inlet and tail pipe. Adjustable position rider's footrests. Five-spring clutch fitted.

Wider rear wheel hubs on spring frame models. Standard type roller bearings fitted in the rear wheels.

1951: Alloy head with hairpin valve springs. Compression ratio raised fractionally to 6.3:1 – removal of a compression plate raised it further to 7.25:1.

The original Type E3AR negative earth dynamo replaced by the Type E3N positive earth dynamo.

Synthetic rubber sealing band fitted to primary chaincase.

New, fatter 'jam-pot' rear suspension units with increased damping oil capacity. Centrestand legs lengthened.

Front fork drain screws relocated, shuttle valve damping discontinued. Forged steel fork top yoke.

1952: Magneto on Matchless models mounted at the front of the engine as on AJS. Redesigned magneto shield.

New, longer cylinder fitted, negating need for

compression plate. High compression cylinder head available.

Burman B52 gearbox fitted with four or five clutch friction plate options. Primary chaincase inspection plate for clutch adjustment.

Due to a shortage of nickel, an argenised matt aluminium finish was used on wheel rims and parts of the suspension, and petrol tanks were stoved black enamel with no chrome. Front fork sliders polished aluminium (no longer painted), aluminium front brake backplate.

Lucas headlight shell with underslung pilot light.

1953: Chrome plating available for export models.

Wider primary chaincase sealing ring. Front brake backplate redesigned. Rear section of rear mudguard fully-detachable.

Dual seat and stop light optional extras.

1954: Lightened flywheels, thicker timing side mainshaft. Higher lift cam profile and revised timing, inlet port and carb choke size increased. Positive oil feed to the valves.

Lucas Type SR-1 magneto with rotating magnets. Automatic advance/retard mechanism fitted on right-hand end of the magneto shaft.

Detachable domed clutch cover on primary chaincase.

New type clutch friction material. Aluminium full

width front hub. Larger mudguards and chainguards. Twin pilot lights. Petrol tank capacity increased to 3½ gallons.

1955: Amal 389 Monobloc carburettor.

Revised barrel-shaped aluminium front hub, matching rear hub with separate brake drum and sprocket. Front fork stanchion diameter increased to 1½in.

New headlight shell incorporating speedometer mounting, ammeter and light switch.

Pillion footrests and silencer supported by box-section brackets welded to rear subframe.

Rigid framed models discontinued.

1956: Compression ratio raised to 7.3:1. Pushrod tubes shortened, ending at the underside of the cylinder head. Exhaust valve guide secured by

circlip. Redesigned frame with vertical seat tube and new swinging arm pivot. Matching slab-sided oil tank and battery housing/toolbox. Magnetic oil filter in crankcase drain plug. Oil tank capacity 5½ pints.

Front brake arm repositioned behind fork slider, fork end caps redesigned, fork damping made more progressive.

1957: AMC gearbox and new clutch incorporating shock absorber. Engine shaft shock absorber discontinued. Seal positioned between back of primary chaincase and crankcase.

Girling rear suspension units with clevis lower mounting fitted. Rear QD hub drive pins enlarged and repositioned requiring redesigned brake drum.

Hinged toolbox lid replaced with push-on type.

1958: Cast aluminium primary chaincase, Lucas RM15 two-phase alternator electrics, coil ignition. Redesigned timing cover housing contact breaker points.

Combined ignition and lighting switch. Seat height lowered.

1959: New deep section one-piece mudguards.

1960: New cylinder head with revised inlet port, valve angle and hemispherical combustion chamber. New inlet camshaft. Cylinder head steady lug strengthened.

Revised gear ratios, bonded clutch friction plates. Three-phase alternator.

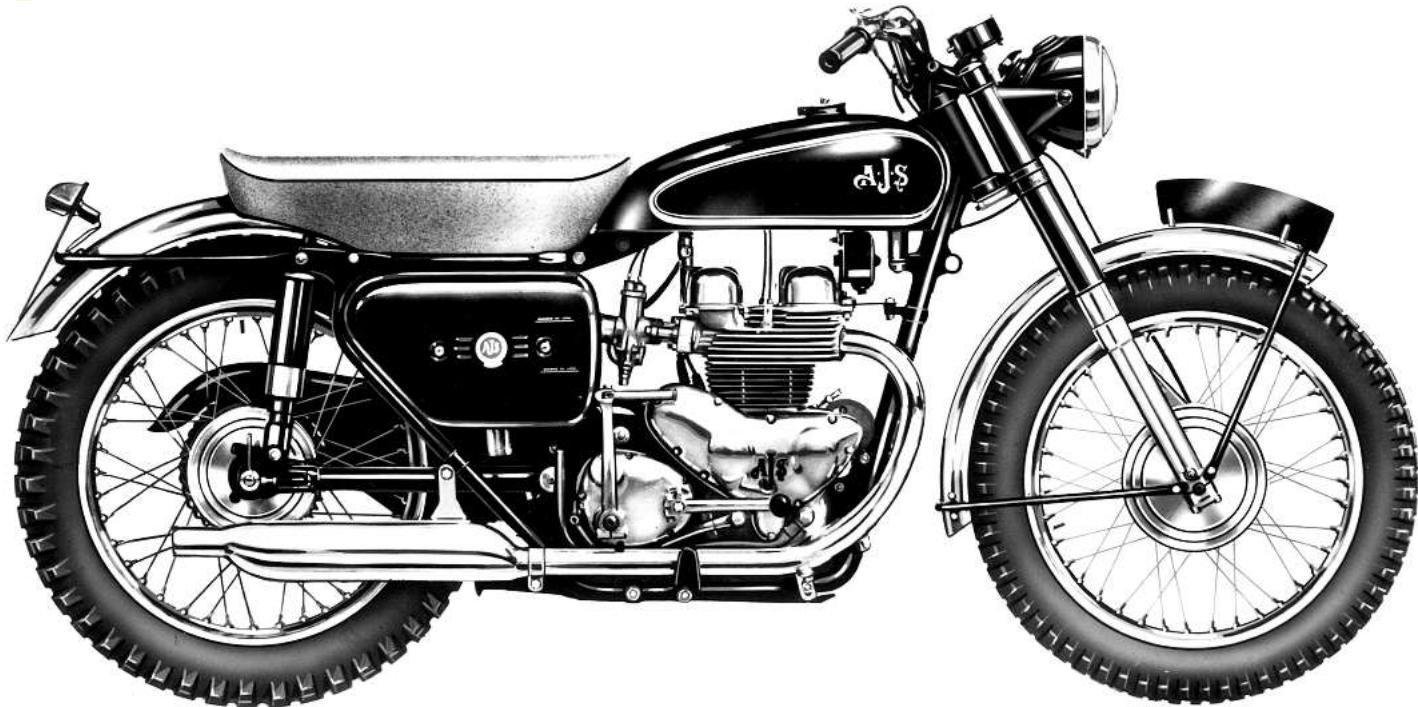
Duplex front downtube frame and new dual seat.

New 4½ gallon petrol tank with three-point mounting. Revised shape, shorter headlight shell. Separate lighting and

1962 Model 18



Model 20CS



ignition switches.

1961: Oil pump drive revised and strengthened. Inlet valve guide secured by circlip.

Mudguards shortened.

1962: AJS Model 18 Statesman and Matchless G80 Major launched.

CSR-type breather towers fitted to oil tanks. Heavy-duty five plate clutch and stronger kickstart return spring.

New die-cast alloy tank badges.

1963: Wheel diameter reduced to 18in; mudguards with added central rib reshaped to suit. Hubs redesigned with journal bearings, brake

shoe width increased to 1½in. Water-excluding internal rib on brake backplates.

Steel plate rear wheel spindle mounts on swinging arm and revised two-piece chainguard fixings.

New rounded shape for oil tank and tool box, cigar-shaped silencer.

New dual seat, narrower at rear and lower at the front. Petrol tank capacity reduced to 4 gallons, filler cap positioned centrally.

1964: Scrambles-based short-stroke engines fitted, bore x stroke 86 x 85.5mm.

Increased finning on cylinder with integral push rod tunnels. Steel flywheels

and connecting rod, 1½in diameter crank pin. Norton type gear oil pump with direct feed to the big-end. Redesigned cams.

Carb choke and exhaust pipe diameters enlarged. Lucas RM19 alternator. Magnetic speedometer.

Norton Roadholder front forks and Norton wheels and brakes.

COMMENTS

AMC heavyweight singles earned a reputation for quality and durability, although some bugbears, like the sealing of the tin primary chaincase, were never resolved.

Jampot rear suspension

units were distinctive but inefficient.

PRICE GUIDE

AJS MODEL 18: £2650-£4350

AJS MODEL 18S: £2750-£4500

MATCHLESS G80S:

£1895-£3995

AJS MODEL 18

STATESMAN: £5350

AJS MODEL 18CS: £4750-£5000

MATCHLESS G80CS: £8450

1959 AJS Model 20 De Luxe and Matchless G9 De Luxe

1959 AJS Model 20 CSR and Matchless G9 CSR

ORIGINAL SPECIFICATION

Bore x stroke: 66 x 72.8mm

Compression ratio: 7:1

Carburettor: Amal Type 89

Ignition: Lucas K2F magneto

Electrics: Lucas E3L dynamo

Gearbox: Burman CP

Frame: Single front downtube with swinging arm

Front forks: AMC Teledraulic

Brakes: Single-sided 7in drums front and rear

Wheels: 19in front and rear

Petrol tank capacity: 4 gallons

Oil capacity: 4 pints

Weight: 394lb

AJS and Matchless twins

AMC set out with the intention of producing twin cylinder machines tailored for two different sections of the market, but before long the combined forces of badge engineering and customer brand loyalty swamped the distinctions.

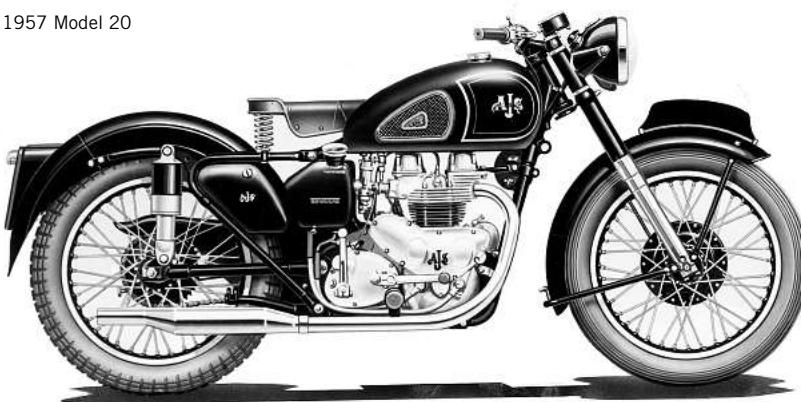
Only much later did the range receive an injection of design flair, but by then the 500s were languishing in the shadow of larger capacity machines.

MODEL NOTES

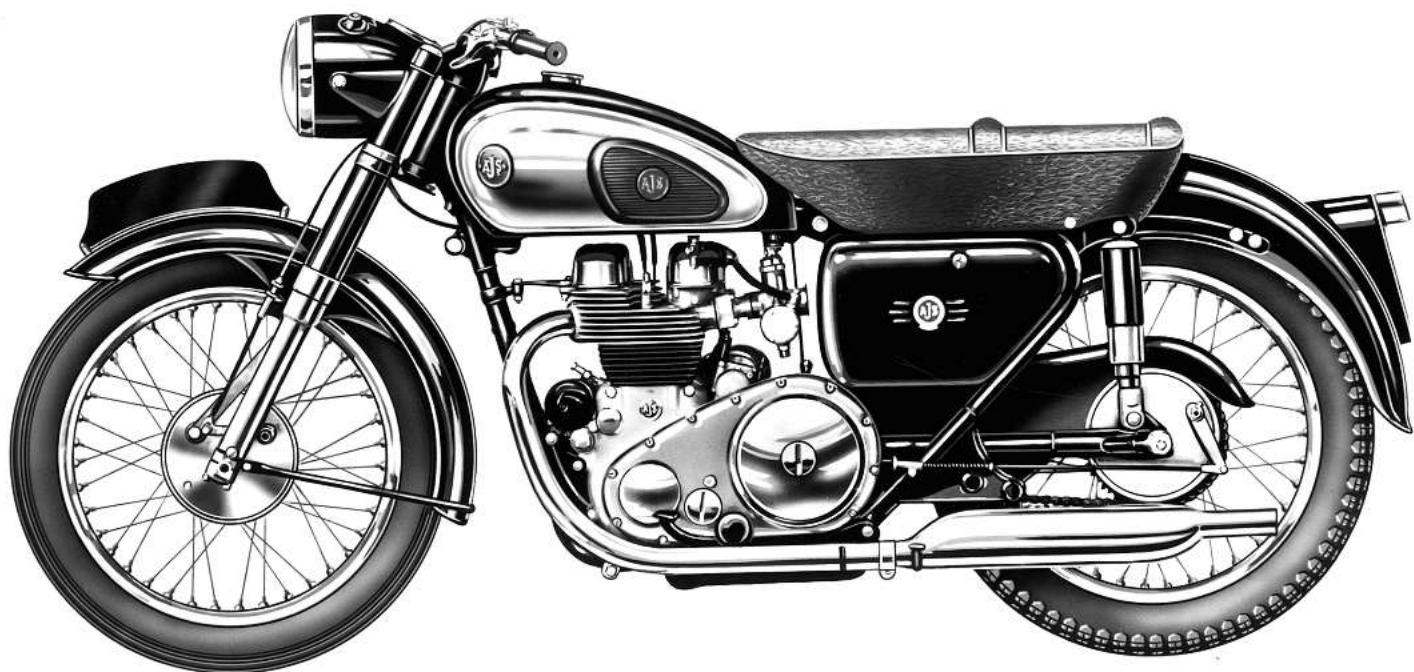
Although the AMC 500 twins were launched at the same time, the AJS Spring Twin was styled as an everyday roadster while the Matchless Super Clubman featured sportier megaphone shaped silencers and a dual seat.

Individual cast iron cylinders and aluminium cylinder heads. Eccentric rocker spindles located in the cylinder heads. Crankshaft featured an

1957 Model 20



■ 1958 Model 20



additional central plain main bearing located between two slim flywheels in a bid to reduce vibration. Separate delivery and return oil pumps.

MODEL DEVELOPMENT

Produced in the factory side-by-side with the AMC single cylinder models, the twins underwent many of the updates to frame and cycleparts documented in the 500 Singles section of this Guide. Changes specific to the twin cylinder models are listed here. All twin cylinder models were fitted with swinging arm frames.

1950: New silencer with offset inlet and tail pipe on the AJS Model 20. Matchless twins retained the megaphone-style silencers throughout production.

Sidestand available as optional extra. Matchless models fitted with 3½ gallon petrol tank.

1951: The original negative earth electrical system replaced by a positive earth system. Ignition kill button relocated to magneto.

Vokes-type air filter fitted. Synthetic rubber sealing

band fitted to primary chaincase. 'Jam-pot' rear suspension units replace the thinner 'candlestick' type.

1952: Burman B52 gearbox fitted. Inspection plate in primary chaincase for clutch adjustment.

Nickel shortage necessitates use of argenised matt aluminium finish on wheel rims and petrol tanks.

Lucas headlight shell with underslung pilot light. Speedometer no longer an optional extra.

1953: Wider primary chaincase sealing ring. Front brake backplate redesigned.

1954: Big-end journal oilways repositioned. Wire-wound pistons no longer fitted to Matchless models.

AJS and Matchless models fitted with 3¾ gallon petrol tanks.

1955: Improved rocker arm lubrication. Amal 376 Monobloc carburettor.

New barrel-shaped full-width aluminium hubs, QD rear wheel spindle.

New headlight shell incorporating speedometer mounting, ammeter and light switch.

1956: Compression ratio

raised to 7.8:1. Magnetic oil filter in crankcase drain plug.

Redesigned frame with matching slab-sided oil tank and battery housing/toolbox. Dual seat lengthened.

1957: Modified inlet and exhaust cams. AMC gearbox and new clutch incorporating shock absorber.

Girling rear suspension

units fitted.

1958: Cast aluminium primary chaincase. Shorter rear shock absorbers lower seat height ½in

1959: Oil metering plugs in cylinder heads.

Aluminium primary chaincase revised to accept Lucas RM15 alternator. Coil ignition with distributor. Combined ignition and lighting switch.

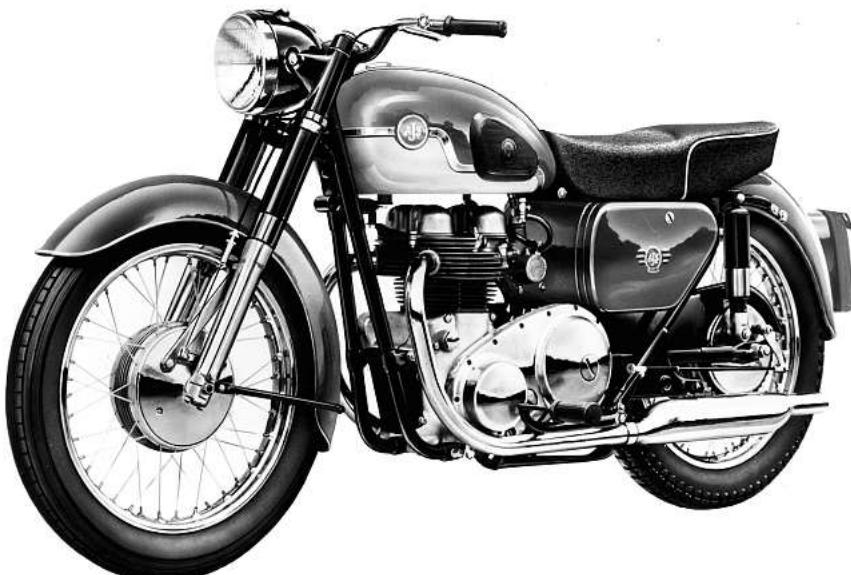
COMMENTS

The AMC 500 twins incorporated several innovative design features that set them apart from other British parallel twins. Chassis design was linked inextricably with the single cylinder bikes and as such remained antiquated.

PRICE GUIDE

AJS MODEL 20: £2950-£5500

■ 1960 Model 20 500 twin



1956 Model VH 500cc Red Hunter single



MATCHLESS G9: £3500-
£3850

MATCHLESS G9 DE LUXE:
£4200

AJS MODEL 20 CSR:
£4500

MATCHLESS G9 CSR:
£4550

Ariel VH Red Hunter single

The Red Hunter can trace its roots back to the

popular four-valve head sporting singles of the 1930s, so not surprisingly, the long-stroke 500 featured strongly in Ariel's postwar line-up.

Sadly, the success of the competition bikes was never reflected in the road-going models.

MODEL DATES

1945-1959 VH Red Hunter

1945-1950 VG De Luxe

1952-1953 VHA Hunt Marshal

ORIGINAL SPECIFICATION

Bore x stroke: 81.8 x 95mm

Compression ratio: 6.8:1

Carburettor: Amal Type 76

Ignition/electrics: Lucas

Magdyno

Gearbox: Burman BA

Frame: Single front downtube with rigid rear frame or Anstey link springing

Front forks: Ariel telescopic

Brakes: Single-sided 7in drums

front and rear

Wheels: 20in front, 19in rear

Petrol tank capacity: 3½ gallons

Oil tank capacity: 4 pints

Weight: 375lb

MODEL DEVELOPMENT

1950: Anstey link rear suspension, QD rear wheel and air filter available as optional extras.

1951: Single wide cam fitted and valve timing modified.

Speedometer housed in new cast alloy fork top yoke. Ammeter and light switch located in headlight shell.

Larger 3½ gallon petrol tank.

De Luxe version discontinued.

1952: All-alloy VHA model introduced with integral push rod tunnels in the cylinder barrel. Cast iron flywheels fitted to all road-going models.

Burman B52 gearbox fitted.

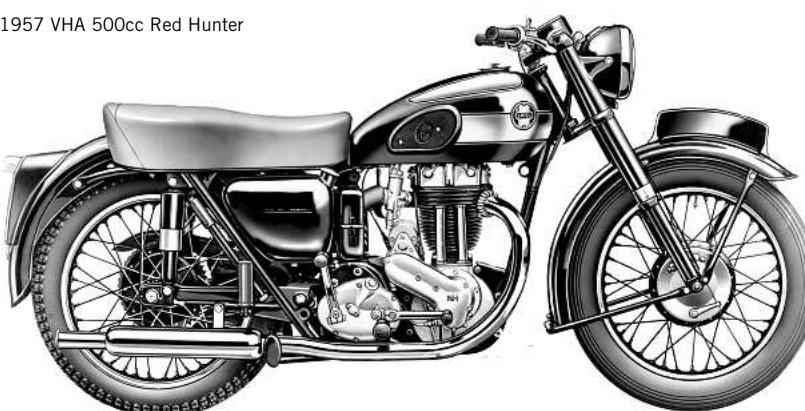
New 6 pint oil tank.

1953: Rocker oil feed taken off return pipe to tank.

Dual seat and pillion footrests fitted as standard.

1954: Swinging arm frame

1957 VHA 500cc Red Hunter



1957 VHA 500 Red Hunter



with duplex front downtubes. Slab-sided 6 pint oil tank and matching battery housing/tool box. Separate oil bath air cleaner. 4 gallon petrol tank with chrome flutes.

VH model fitted with alloy head and iron barrel with integral push rod tunnels.

VHA model discontinued. **1955:** Exhaust valve head diameter reduced. Access holes in rocker boxes to facilitate checking the valve clearances. Amal Monobloc carburettor.

19in front wheel rim. Tail end of rear mudguard extended.

1956: Full-width front and rear brake hubs with fulcrum adjustment. Fully

enclosed rear chain. QD rear wheel.

Headlight cowling and fork top panel housing speedometer, light switch and ammeter.

4 gallon petrol tank with single bolt fixing.

1957: 4½ gallon petrol tank. New deeper section front mudguard.

1958: Rear chain enclosure made optional extra.

COMMENTS

Earlier sporting aspirations in keeping with the 'Red Hunter' name became lost as heavy cycleparts designed for the 'serious all-rounder' swamped the 500. Anstey-link rear

suspension system was heavy, offered limited travel and wore quickly.

In general, Ariel four-stroke motorcycles were aimed at a market that was fast dwindling.

PRICE GUIDE

VH RED HUNTER: £3250-£4999

VG DE LUXE: £6840

VHA: £2700-£6500

Ariel KH and KG twins

Prolific motorcycle designer Val Page was responsible for Ariel's 500cc vertical twin (as he was for the Red Hunter singles and

Triumph's 6/1 twin of the mid 1930s) and for a while it seemed that it might gain a firm footing in the market. But it was under-developed, under-powered and finally eclipsed in 1954 by the company's 650cc twin.

MODEL DATES

1948-1957 KH Red

Hunter/Fieldmaster

1945-1951 KG De Luxe

1952-1953 KHA Twin

ORIGINAL SPECIFICATION

Bore x stroke: 63 x 80mm

Compression ratio: KG 6.8:1,

KH 7.5:1

Carburettor: Amal Type 76

Ignition: Lucas or BTH magneto

Electrics: Lucas Dynamo

Gearbox: Burman BA

Frame: Single front downtube with rigid rear frame or Anstey link springing

Front forks: Ariel telescopic

Brakes: Single-sided 7in drums front and rear

Wheels: 20in front, 19in rear

Petrol tank capacity: 3½ gallons

Oil tank capacity: 4 pints

Weight: 384lb

MODEL NOTES

The 500cc Ariel twin motor featured twin camshafts situated at the front and back of the crankcase with pushrods in the extreme four corners of the cylinder block. The housing for the rocker arms and spindles

1956 Model VH 500cc Red Hunter single



1957-59 VH Red Hunter

50cc KH Fieldmaster twin



was cast integrally with the cylinder head with two aluminium covers, each secured by a single stud, allowing access for valve adjustment.

For ease of access, and to avoid oil contamination, the clutch was located on the outside of the aluminium alloy primary chaincase and covered by a chromed steel dome.

MODEL DEVELOPMENT

1950: Larger 3½ gallon petrol tank.

Anstey link rear suspension, QD rear wheel and air filter available as optional extras.

1951: Flywheel weight increased. Finning increased on cylinder and cylinder head.

New 4 gallon petrol tank.

Tank top panel discontinued but oil pressure gauge remained in top of tank. Ammeter and light switch relocated in headlight shell. Speedometer housed in new cast alloy fork top yoke.

1952: Burman B52 gearbox fitted. New 6 pint oil tank.

De Luxe version discontinued.

1953: All-alloy KHA model introduced with choice of 6.8:1 or 7.5:1 compression ratios. This model produced for one year only.

Dual seat and pillion footrests fitted as standard. New prop stand with foot plate and extension peg.

1954: Swinging arm frame with duplex front downtubes. Slab-sided 6 pint oil tank and matching battery housing/tool box. 4 gallon petrol tank.

New alloy cylinder head fitted on existing iron cylinder block.

1955: Hardened steel timing chain tensioner blade fitted. Amal Monobloc carburettor.

19in front wheel rim. Tail end of rear mudguard extended.

1956: KH Red Hunter renamed the Fieldmaster.

Full-width front and rear brake hubs with fulcrum adjustment. Fully enclosed

rear chain. QD rear wheel.

Headlight cowling and fork top panel housing speedometer, light switch and ammeter.

4 gallon petrol tank with single bolt fixing, oil pressure gauge deleted.

1957: 4½ gallon petrol tank. New deeper section front mudguard.

COMMENTS

Cylinder head joint prone to oil leaks due to poor accessibility to the nuts on the holding down studs. Early-type timing chain tensioners prone to rapid wear.

Anstey-link rear suspension system was heavy, offered limited travel and wore quickly.

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1951 Model KH twin



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I'M UNCERTAIN WHEN it was that psychology was invented. Or was it discovered? Maybe someone was rummaging in an old tobacco tin looking for a straight if slightly second-hand split-pin when they discovered psychology? Who can tell? I'm not even entirely sure whether psychology is a good idea, myself.

And that's the problem: psychology is all about thinking too much; overthinking usually produces doubt, and doubt reduces confidence, and a lack of confidence can result in sudden and unexpected encounters with either the roadway or the scenery. Neither of these is exactly great. So there is plainly a problem with psychology.

Another item for which I have almost no affection at all is riding in the dark. Time was that I actually enjoyed it, and would head out on a regular ride from the old Somerset homestead either to the wolds of East Anglia or the wilds of the Welsh hills – immediately after tea. I'd plan it that way, so that I'd either be heading east with the setting sun behind me, or heading north into the mountains, whose black silhouettes would provide silent company as I bounded along, either Commando or Bezer mounted, usually. The roads would empty as citizens settled in front of their televisions and I would be confident enough of Mr Lucas's lights to settle into that night-time rhythm, the exhaust's bellow adding to that chariot of fire feeling, propelling the bike and its rider into the deeper dark.

I'm not sure when it changed, but suspect that it's another of those unanticipated age-related tediousnesses which erupt when least expected. Or maybe citizens stay out more these days. Their cars are certainly possessed of headlighting which completely swamps the best efforts of even a 12v alternator charging system. Do you remember the surprise the first time you observed that the strange mobile shadow in the pool of light projected from your own headlamp was actually your own shadow, cast into the dark road ahead by the halogen array of the car behind you? In my case, the sudden blinding – ahem – understanding came when I was first sandwiched between two brilliant sets of car lights, one ahead, the other behind, and considered with only mild panic that I could actually see nothing. Nothing at all.

Which is where psychology comes in, wagging a finger and making 'tut-tut' noises. If you're familiar – decently familiar – with the road and its character,

momentary blindness isn't much of a threat. Ignore it, wait for the oncoming dazzle to pass behind you and all will once more be revealed. Let's not at this point consider a scenario involving a long stream of approaching dazzle-wagons. That requires stern action. No, not hitting main-beam; that only outrages the oncoming, who can sear your retinae if they take similar retaliatory action.

If you ignore thinking completely, you'll usually be okay. This is superficially strange logic, but it relies on the animal in you – the great ape rather than the hom-sap bit – acting by instinct. And your instinct remembers where the road goes (it saw it before the dazzle, and is good at remembering), so it lets the wheels track true until vision is restored. Try it.

What too often happens is that overthinking takes place and the rider endures what modernists refer to as a panic attack. An extremely dodgy pair of words, given that

panic is usually a protective reaction, but we'll ignore that. Panic attacks on a motorcycle too often involve sitting bolt upright and braking. I've watched it happen and it's strange to observe if I'm not sharing the panic. One reason I dislike riding with others is because they overreact to lots of mostly harmless stimuli. I digress.

Many years ago, a wise man shared his way of riding safely in vile weather; in darkness, snow, ice, mud – any combination of these. 'Look where you're going,' he told me. Which sounds so obvious that already I can feel your sneers. But it's not. 'Watch where you want to be, not the road, not the front wheel, not the lights of the oncoming traffic. Let the hind brain do its unsophisticated stuff and you'll be fine.' He was right. It works. The guy in question rode off-road a lot as well as clocking up more thousands of miles a year than I've ever managed, and I've always followed his advice.

What about diesel spills? What about snow? What about... Those are all sensible, rational thoughts and concerns, and they are all valid. But travel at the right speed for the conditions and watch your exits; rely on your skill and balance and expertise as a rider... and enjoy the experience.

Which is why I so miss night riding. I have no problems with letting the animal control the machine... I do have terrible problems riding when I can no longer see where I'm going, even when I'm the only rider on the road that night. This is the problem with psychology; since its invention we all think too much. **CBG**

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WHO IS FRANK WESTWORTH?

Frank Westworth is the editor of *RealClassic* magazine, the latest in a long series of publications which began in 1982 when he was bullied into producing the *Jampot*, the previously excellent magazine of the AJS & Matchless OC. He has a mysterious obsession with old motorcycles, not all of them rotary Nortons, and with riding them, which he does very slowly...

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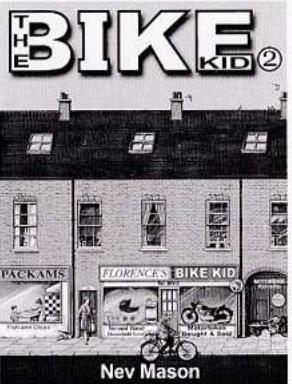
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Television scrambles

In December 1954, the first specially-staged TV scramble took place at Beenham. Little did anyone know just how popular the winter series would become

THE FIRST TELEVISED scramble took place at Beenham, near Reading in December 1954 and, as one might expect with off-road racing at that time of year, the muddy conditions made life extremely difficult and the meeting took place over a shorter course than normally used by the South Reading club.

The BBC had previously successfully televised live speedway and road racing, but the difficulty of covering an off-road event like scrambling had meant it had never previously been tried.

Although the BBC was only transmitting racing live from 2.45pm, and for a total of 45 minutes, its army of staff and equipment was ready to roll at 11am to establish the best camera angles. H R Taylor's report says, "many more laps were ridden before the 2.45 start, than after it!"

The racing was dominated by Les Archer who won his heat and the final riding a 'cammy' Norton. John Draper, on a works Gold Star was second in the final from

These photos are from the Mortons Archive. For more details about the archive see page 4

factory Triumph mounted Johnny Giles. The world's first newspaper TV critic, L Marsland Gander of the *Daily Telegraph*, wrote in *The Motor Cycle*: "Obviously the sport has exciting possibilities but viewers will need to know more about it before they really take it to their hearts."

Clearly the viewers enjoyed it because after both the Beeb and ITV had flirted with the coverage of scrambles for some years, The BBC Grandstand Trophy, with commentator Murray Walker, became compulsive Saturday viewing, loved by millions, while the series was aired from 1963 until 1970. **CBG**

*If you wish to know more about the TV scrambles, grab a copy of – **On Air! The BBC Grandstand Trophy 1963-1970** – written by Ian Berry and published by Panther Publishing. Published in 2013, Berry's in-depth work is fabulously illustrated, it offers a comprehensive review, with race results, of the entire series.

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